ST. BERNARD'S SERMONS

ON THE

CANTICLE OF CANTICLES

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TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN

BY

A PRIEST OF MOUNT MELLERAY

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TO

THE MOST REVEREND BERNARD HACKETT, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF WATERFORD AND LISMORE,

THIS TRANSLATION OF THE SERMONS OF
ST. BERNARD

ON THE CANTICLE OF CANTICLES

IS HUMBLY AND RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

So far as I am aware, this is the first attempt on the part of a Catholic to render St. Bernard's famous Discourses on the Canticle of Canticles available for English readers. It is passing strange that it should be so; passing strange that the most important work, perhaps, of him who has been called by excellence the Doctor of Love and the Prince of Mystics, should be so neglected. But the Sermons on the Canticle are not singular in this respect. The same neglect has been extended to practically all the writings of the Mellifluous Doctor, with great loss to spirituality. The cause of this is not easy to determine. Want of appreciation it can hardly be. Surely no one could read those grandest of prose-poems, those sweetest of love-songs, which have been for ages the delight of religious souls and have nourished the piety of saints unnumbered, without feeling his heart touched and his mind illumined. But, whatever the explanation, the fact remains, and it does not speak well for Catholic scholarship. For it is only by those of the household that St. Bernard has been so forgotten. Non-Catholic writers have shown themselves, if not more appreciative, at any rate, more zealous and enterprising. One cannot help feeling a sense of shame at beholding the elegant translations of some of the Saint's more celebrated treatises, published even in our own times, by such Protestant scholars as Drs. Eales and Gardner. It looks as if, by a strange

irony of fate, heresy had obtained a monopoly of the very man who, in his day, was its most formidable opponent.

It would not be easy to exaggerate the influence, direct and indirect, of St. Bernard's writings on the religious history of the last eight centuries. According to Horstius, who wrote about 1679, they were more universally read, and republished more frequently, than the works of any other of the Fathers. Not alone have they served the Church as a powerful means of edification, but even many of the most beautiful devotions which adorn her liturgy and strengthen her hold on the hearts of her children, owe to them their inspiration or their popularity—such as the devotion to the Sacred Heart, to the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, to St. Joseph, to the Holy Angels, and the Guardian Angels in particular. Mystical and ascetical writers of every age, since their first publication, have found in them an inexhaustible mine of spiritual treasures, wherewith they have not hesitated to enrich their own compositions. Thus many of the brilliant epigrams and beautiful images which adorn the pages of popular authors are but borrowed plumes, derived from the works of St. Bernard. Sir Francis Cruise has shown how enormously the author of the *Imitation* is indebted to our Saint. His influence is also clearly discernible in the two other works which, in their various ways, had perhaps the largest share in moulding medieval thought, viz., St. Thomas's *Summa Theologica* and Dante's *Divina Commedia*. The same is true of the works of St. John of the Cross and St. Francis of Sales, the two great masters of the spiritual life most in favour with modern mystics. The highest honour which can be rendered to

any writer is the adoption of his words into the dogmatic system of Christ's infallible Church, which are thus, in some sense, put on a level with the inspired oracles of Holy Writ. According to the Abbé Ratisbon, such honour was paid to the writings of St. Bernard by the great Council of Trent, for in its authentic exposition of the doctrine of justification it "reproduces his teaching almost word for word."

As to the intrinsic excellence of those writings, it would, of course, be the height of presumption on my part to venture an opinion. But I think the reader will thank me if I present him with a few appreciations from the pens of competent judges. They have been selected with a view to the greatest variety as regards age, nationality, and religious persuasion.

Catholic Testimonies.

I call to mind his holy and wonderful life, how he was endowed with a singular prerogative of grace, and not only did he possess in himself in an extraordinary degree the gifts of devotion and sanctity, but he also illustrated the universal Church of God with the light of his faith and his learning.—Pope Alexander III.

By the acuteness of his genius, the sanctity of his life, and his knowledge of Sacred Scripture, he rendered most important service to the Universal Church. . . . With voice and pen he attacked and confounded the heretics of his time, and by his learning defended the Roman See against its assailants.—Pope Pius VIII.

The works of St. Bernard have a flavour of admirable sweetness so that he is always read with a holy delight. —Cardinal Valerius.

He was gifted with a sublime eloquence, and so rich in saintly wisdom and eminent in holiness, that while we garner his teaching we should make his life our model. Bernard, the great contemplative (altissimus

contemplator), tasted all the sweetness of prayer; if you, too, would find a relish in prayer, ruminate his words. Not only are they spiritual and heart-penetrating, but they are also exquisite in style and calculated to impel you to the service of God.—ST. BONAVENTURE.

In him we see gleaming the nine precious stones of which the Prophet Ezechiel speaks, by which are signified the nine choirs of angels, for Bernard possessed the virtues and exercised the offices of all the angelic orders. His mouth was a chalice of purest gold, all studded with jewels, making the whole world drunk with the wine of its sweetness.—ST. THOMAS AQUINAS.

Blessed art thou, O honey-tongued Bernard, amongst all the Doctors of the Church, whose soul was marvellously enlightened by the eternal splendours of the Word, who from the abundance of thy heart spoke so sweetly and so touchingly of the Saviour's Passion. . . . No wonder thy tongue should distil such sweetness, since thy heart was filled with the honey that flows from meditation on the sufferings of Christ.—B. HENRY SUSO.

He lived most holily and taught most excellently. . . . As the face of Moses shone so brightly from the divine communications vouchsafed him that it dazzled the eyes of the people, so did Bernard radiate throughout the Church the light of heavenly knowledge with which his soul was flooded.—WILLIAM OF PARIS.

St. Bernard was truly an apostolic man. Rather he was a true apostle sent by God, mighty in word and work, everywhere confirming his mission by his miracles, so that in no respect does he come short of the great apostles.—CARDINAL BARONIUS.

St. Bernard was truly an apostle, not less illustrious for his miracles than for the splendour of his wisdom. He has more miracles to his credit than any other saint whose life has been written.—CARDINAL BELLARMIN.

Bernard is sweet, pious, penetrating, elegant, eloquent, inflaming.—RIBERA.

His discourse is every way sweet and ardent. It so

delights and fervently inflames, that, from his most sweet tongue, honey and milk seem to flow in his words, and out of his most ardent breast a fire of burning affections breaks out.—SIXTUS SINENSIS.

Where can any one find for himself a more excellent teacher of divine love than this Saint, whose words are but so many sparks shot forth from the furnace of charity ?—GERSON.

Of all the Greek Fathers I am most pleased with Chrysostom, who excels in fluency, variety, and every kind of ornament. Amongst the Latins I prefer Bernard, whose ardour and piquancy arouse the emotions, whilst his acuteness and wisdom inform the mind.—LIPSIUS.

No monk ever either wrote better or lived more holily. . . . Bernard's language is unusually limpid and prudent. Hence he is often highly praised, even by the enemies of the Church, not only for his great learning, but also for his skill and moderation as a teacher.—B. PETER CANISIUS.

Bernard enkindles in the hearts of his readers the same sweet flame of love which consumes his own. His lips distil milk and honey, especially when he speaks of the Incarnate Word or His Virgin Mother.—CORNELIUS A LAPIDE.

Bernard is Christianly learned, holily eloquent, devoutly cheerful and pleasant, powerful in moving the passions.—ERASMUS.

Read that most beautiful book *De Consideratione*, and from its most noble style you will understand that the author was more eloquent than Demosthenes, more subtle than Aristotle, wiser than Plato, more prudent than Socrates.—HELINANDUS.

His works are the most useful for piety amongst all the writings of the Fathers.—VALOIS.

The elect of God amongst the elect, the most excellent teacher of religious, the light and glory of monks, the model and example of the devout, who was presented from on high with such graces, adorned with such qualities, distinguished by such privileges, that

no mind is powerful enough to conceive his greatness, no tongue eloquent enough to speak his praises.—DENIS THE CARTHUSIAN.

Next to the Sacred Scriptures, no works should be more prized by the religious-minded, for none are more profitable, than those of St. Bernard. In them are found united all the perfections dispersed through the works of others: solidity of doctrine, grace of style, variety of matter, elegance of diction, conciseness, fervour, force of expression.—MABILLON.

It is impossible to find a more sublime personification of the Catholic Church, combating against the heretics of his time, than the illustrious Abbot of Clairvaux, who speaks, as it were, in the name of the Christian faith. No one could more worthily represent the ideas and sentiments which the Church endeavoured to diffuse amongst mankind, or more faithfully delineate the course through which Catholicism would have led the human intellect. Let us pause in the presence of this gigantic mind, which attained to an eminence far beyond any of its contemporaries. This extraordinary man fills the world with his name, upheaves it with his word, sways it by his influence. In the midst of darkness he is its light. . . . His exposition of a point of doctrine is remarkable for ease and lucidity; his demonstrations are vigorous and conclusive; his reasoning is conducted with a force of logic that presses hard upon his adversary and leaves him no means of escape; in defence his quickness and address are surprising. In his answers he is clear and precise; in repartee ready and penetrating; and without dealing in the subtleties of the schools, he displays wonderful tact in disengaging truth from error, sound reason from artifice and fraud. Here is a man formed entirely and exclusively under the influence of Catholicism, a man who never dreamed of setting his intellect free from the yoke of authority; and yet he rises like a mighty pyramid above all the men of his time.—BALMEZ.

St. Bernard in his writings is equally tender, sweet,

and vigorous. His style is lively, sublime, and pleasant. . . . He treats theological subjects after the manner of the ancients, on which account, and because of the great excellence of his writings he is reckoned amongst the Fathers. And though the youngest of them in time, he is one of the most useful to those who desire to study and to improve their hearts in sincere piety. —ALBAN BUTLER.

There seems to have been in this one mind an inexhaustible abundance, variety, and versatility of gifts. Without ever ceasing to be the holy and mortified religious, St. Bernard appears to be the ruling will of his time. He stands forth as pastor, preacher, mystical writer, controversialist, reformer, pacificator, mediator, arbiter, diplomatist, and statesman. Of all the writers of the first thousand years of the Church, none is more full of fervent, adoring, tender love for our Divine Lord, and none is more conspicuous for ardent affection and veneration for the Mother of God.—CARDINAL MANNING.

Nature's favourite, grace enriched him with her choicest gifts. . . . A prodigy of eloquence, speaking to all the stern language of duty and yet ever winning the enthusiastic love of all, he was a living miracle of the power of religion and of the heavenly charm of grace. As an orator and a writer he stands foremost in his day. . . . His style is spirited and flowery, his thoughts ingenious; his imagination brilliant and rich in allegories; his assiduous meditation on and study of the Sacred Text had so interwoven it with his thoughts that their every utterance naturally reproduced its ideas and expression.—DARRAS.

We know a man who, though living in solitude, could sway the world and direct the Church by the charm of his words and the power of his genius. Though the mildest of men, he was at the same time the most resolute. . . . We speak of St. Bernard, whose mental and moral greatness his contemporaries in the twelfth century knew so well how to prize.—ROHRBACHER.

Thou art he, O mellifluous Bernard, who dost con-

tinue still, as heretofore, to irrigate the world with the dew of thy heavenly doctrine and most sweetly to refresh it with thy writings, flowing with milk and honey. Whilst perusing these, we seem to enjoy the pleasures of the promised land, even in this place of horror and desolation, and the bitter waters of the desert appear to be sweetened with a foretaste of our future bliss.—HORST.

What can so enliven our devotion, excite our contrition, or inflame our love as the life and teaching of the blessed Father St. Bernard? Where shall we find one more efficacious in exhorting to virtue, in dissuading from vice, in lifting our affections from earth to heaven?—DE HASSIA.

NON-CATHOLIC TESTIMONIES.

Bernard surpasses all the other Doctors of the Church. —LUTHER.

The Abbot Bernard, in his books *De Consideratione*, speaks in the language of truth itself.—CALVIN.

Who can write more sweetly than Bernard? His meditations I call a river of Paradise, spiritual nectar, the food of angels, the very soul of piety.—HEIN.

A few of Bernard's pages contain more spirit and life and doctrine and faith than all the writings of Jerome.—NEANDER.

In speech, in writing, in action, Bernard stood high above his rivals and contemporaries. . . . He became the oracle of Europe.—GIBBON.

Never has there been a religious better able to reconcile engrossment in the tumult of affairs with the austerity of his state of life. He, beyond all others, acquired an influence springing from purely personal merits and surpassing in efficacy official authority.—VOLTAIRE.

St. Bernard was the most eloquent, the most influential, the most piously disinterested of the Christians of his age.—GUIZOT.

We are used to speak of St. John as the Apostle of

Love. The title "Doctor of Love" will sufficiently define St. Bernard's place among the theologians of the Church.—GARDNER.

One would hardly know where to find a brighter example of the power which is imparted to the preacher by this always noble, if sometimes dangerous and misleading, faculty (of imagination). It is perpetually apparent in Bernard. Whatever else he is or is not, he is never commonplace. His mind is fruitful in large suggestions, and the text is often hardly more than a nest from which, like the eagle, he lifts himself on eager wing, to touch, if he may, the stars of light. —STORRS.

With respect to the Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles in particular, I cannot refrain from quoting a few additional witnesses, even at the risk of wearying the reader :—

They contain whatever the holy Doctor has said in his other works appertaining to morals and piety ; in fact, all that he ever wrote on the virtues and vices and the spiritual life. All this he repeats in these Discourses, but with greater solidity and elevation of style, whilst he removes the veils and obscurities from the mystical and allegorical senses of the Sacred Text, and brings forth to the light all the secrets of perfection, in a manner no less delightful than sublime.—MABILLON.

He spoke to men in the language of angels and they were scarcely able to understand it.—FLEURY.

The questions so beautifully treated here are precisely those which appear in St. Thomas's *Summa*.—DALGAIRNS.

In this immortal code of divine love, he celebrates the nuptials of the soul with God, and depicts in lines of light that Bride who loves only for the sake of loving and being loved. . . . Human tenderness, no matter how eloquent, has never inspired accents more passionate or more profound.—MONTALEMBERT.

The Sermons are tremulous with the incessant shimmer of allegories . . . . so rich in their spiritual

suggestiveness that they strike upon the mind like rays straight from heaven, and belonging to that "light that never was on sea or shore."—EALES.

The Sermons were begun in the Advent of 1135, after the Saint's return from his second mission to Aquitaine, which had resulted happily in the conversion of Duke William. The first suggestion of them came from the Carthusian, Bernard de Portis. So much is clear from two extant letters on the subject, addressed by the holy Abbot to this religious. In the earlier of these, he gently remonstrates with his friend, who, as he says, was imposing on him a task for which he had neither time nor talent. "The more insistent you have been in asking," he writes, "the more resolute have I been in refusing, not out of disregard for you but through compassion for myself. . . . My reluctance has been proportionate to your eagerness. Do you ask why? I will tell you. It is because of my fears lest such great expectations should be disappointed by the birth of nothing better than the 'ridiculous mouse.'" However, he yields to his friend's importunity and promises to send on immediately a few of the Sermons on the Canticle, already composed, in order to cure him of the desire for any more. Still, should these meet with his correspondent's approval, he engages to go forward with the work according to his opportunities. In the second letter, after apologising for not having kept an appointment to visit the Carthusian community, he says: "The Sermons on the Canticles which you asked and which I promised you, I am forwarding herewith. When you have gone through them, write and tell me whether I am to proceed or to desist." Some have supposed that this Bernard de

Portis is the Friend to whom the Saint refers in his first Discourse.

During the eighteen years that intervened between this commencement and his death, in 1153, St. Bernard continued his lectures, preaching sometimes every day, as we learn from Sermon XXII; sometimes only on festivals, according as his health and preoccupations permitted. But interruptions were frequent and long, for the Preacher was often called away to bring to an end a dangerous schism, or to make peace between princes, or to put a stop to scandals, or to marshal the forces of Europe for another mighty effort against the powers of the Saracen. Although many passages occur, which were evidently spoken extempore, the Saint, as a rule, took pains with the preparation of his Discourses. One of his biographers gives us a pleasing picture of him reposing from his external labours in the seclusion of a garden bower, formed of a trellis covered over with sweet-pea; it was there, whilst absorbed in divine contemplation, that his soul was filled with these songs of love, these spiritual epithalamiums. There is evidence in the Sermons themselves that, sometimes at any rate, they were only written down after being delivered to the brethren in the monastic auditorium. On such occasions, only the choir religious, including the novices, attended, the lay-brothers not being supposed to understand Latin. Mabillon, however, states that the Saint himself, for their benefit, preached the same Discourses in the French language, and that he had himself examined some of these translations in manuscript. Such charity would not surprise us in St. Bernard. The hour for these love-feasts varied. Sometimes it was in the morning, as we gather from

Sermons I and XLVII; sometimes in the evening, as is implied in Sermon LXXI.

The reader may feel disappointed if he fails to bear in mind that the holy Abbot is here not commenting, but preaching, on the "Song of Solomon," and is, therefore, entitled to the liberties of a preacher. As a matter of fact, the text serves him but as a frame whereon to weave the wondrously beautiful fabrics of an extraordinarily fertile fancy, as a point of departure whence to wing his luminous way around the wide-extended realms of thought, or as a watch-tower, from which to contemplate all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. Thus these Sermons, instead of being dry-as-dust homilies, are as varied and many-coloured as is the spiritual life, every aspect of which they discuss with equal solidity and elegance. They exhibit the same independence of thought and treatment which characterise all the other works of their Author. Saints Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory the Great are almost the only human authorities whom St. Bernard ever makes use of, and even on these his dependence is very slight. On the other hand, no other writer is so full of Holy Scripture, from which he borrows something in nearly every sentence. Even when he is not actually quoting from it, his speech is unconsciously attuned to the music of its cadences.

The saintly Preacher had purposed to go over the whole of the Canticle. But death overtook him whilst engaged on the first verse of the third chapter, that is, when he had completed a fourth of his task, in eighty-six Sermons. In some editions we find the number eighty-seven, but this is because the two readings of XXIV are given as distinct Sermons, or because

one of the longer Discourses has been divided. Only eighty-six Sermons in eighteen years! Yes, but if you consider the multitudinous cares, the "solicitudes for all the Churches," and for all the States as well, that pressed upon the Saint, you will rather wonder how he found time to accomplish so much. Nevertheless, supremely important as were his services to religion and society in his capacities as churchman and statesman, canonist, propagandist, and peace-maker, we cannot but lament, as he himself lamented, the necessities that called him away from this more congenial occupation. One Gilbert of Hoiland took up the work where St. Bernard left off, and advanced as far as verse 10 of chapter v. in forty-eight Sermons, which, in the judgment of Mabillon, are almost worthy of the Saint himself. According to the same eminent authority, this Gilbert was an Irishman, and Abbot of St. Mary's, Dublin. Horst supposed him to have been Abbot of another Cistercian house of the same name in Lincoln. But as the evidence in favour of this view was fully known to Mabillon yet failed to influence him, we are justified in regarding it as negligible.

The only merit claimed for this Translation is that of fidelity to the original. I have endeavoured to represent the author's thought simply and clearly without any effort after ornament or eloquence. The undertaking has been far from easy. An eminent prelate, now no more, used to declare that St. Bernard was untranslatable. That is certainly an exaggeration. But so much at least is true, that hardly is there another writer whose thought is so difficult to detach from his language, because there is hardly another whose language is so closely wedded to his thought. Logicians tell us that words are only conventional signs of ideas,

but one feels inclined to make an exception in the case of St. Bernard. With him the ideas seemed to have blossomed into expression naturally and spontaneously, so wonderful is the felicitousness and aptness of the latter. All this, of course, as well as the unnumbered inimitable graces of style and diction which make the Latin so delightful to read, has been lost in the translation. Hence it appears how inadequately these pages represent the original. But it is enough for me if I have succeeded, as I hope I have, in rendering accessible to those for whom the Latin is a sealed fountain the authoritative teaching of so great a Master of the interior life. The dissemination of such doctrines can hardly fail to be fruitful of good, especially in these days of spiritual renaissance, when so many souls are looking for light, when so many questions are being asked concerning the relation between modern mysticism and the medieval, when mysticism itself is attracting so much attention, both within and without the Church, and so many religious " specialists " are loudly advertising their own misty varieties of the thing, or their nebulous theories thereon.

It has been thought advisable to publish the present Translation of the Sermons on the Canticle in two volumes, each containing forty-three Discourses. A third volume, uniform with these, shall include, with selected treatises, the Saint's twenty-seven Homilies on Psalm xc. These have never before appeared in English, and are in quite the same style and of equal merit with those on the Song of Solomon.

Feast of St. Bernard, 1919.

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ST. BERNARD'S SERMONS

ON THE

CANTICLE OF CANTICLES.

SERMON I.

On the Meaning of the Title: "Solomon's Canticle of Canticles."

You, my brethren, require instruction different from that which would suit people living in the world, and if not in matter, in manner, at least. For a teacher who would follow the example of St. Paul, should give *them* "milk to drink, not meat." But more solid food must be set before spiritual persons, as the same Apostle teaches us by his practice. "We speak," he says, "not in the learned words of human wisdom, but in the doctrine of the Spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Again, "We speak wisdom amongst the perfect"—such, my brethren, as I believe you to be, unless, indeed, it is to no purpose that you have been so long engaged in the study of spiritual things, in mortifying your senses, and in meditating day and night on the law of God. So now open your mouths to receive not milk, but bread. It is the bread of Solomon, and is exceedingly good and palatable. For the Book entitled the Canticle of Canticles is the bread I speak of, which may now, if you please, be brought forth to be broken.

By the words of Ecclesiastes,* you have been, I think, through the grace of God, already sufficiently enlightened to understand and despise the vanity of this world. What need to mention the Book of Proverbs? Is not your whole life and conduct regulated and reformed in perfect accordance with the doctrines contained therein? Having, therefore, tasted first both these loaves of bread, borrowed, however, from the cupboard of the Friend, you are now invited to try this third loaf,† which, mayhap, you will find stronger. As there are two evils which, solely or especially, wage war against the soul, we are given the two Books of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs to oppose to them. Of these the former, using the hoe of discipline, grubs out whatever is corrupt in our morals, and whatever is superfluous in the indulgence of the flesh; whilst the latter, by the light of reason, prudently discovers the smoke of vanity in all worldly glory, and distinguishes it faithfully from the solidity of truth, putting the fear of God and the observance of His commandments before all human interests and earthly desires. This is well. Such fear is the beginning of true wisdom, as such observance is its consummation —assuming you agree with me that the only true and

* Some gather from these words that St. Bernard had previously composed commentaries on the Books here mentioned, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs. But the inference appears to be quite unwarranted. Especially, as in the list of works given by Geoffrey, secretary and biographer of the Saint, there is no mention of any such productions.—(Translator.)

† The allusion here is to Luke xi. 5-8: "Which of you shall have a friend and shall go to him at midnight, and shall say to him: Friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine is come off his journey to me, and I have not what to set before him."—(Translator.)

perfect wisdom consists in avoiding evil and doing good. For without the fear of God it is impossible to avoid evil perfectly, and there is no good work possible without the observance of the commandments.

Now, then, after ridding ourselves of these two evils by the study of those two books, we may confidently take in hand this third discourse on holy contemplation, which, being the fruit of the preceding, should only be entrusted to sober minds and chastened ears. For it would be criminal presumption on the part of imperfect souls to occupy themselves with such a sacred subject before the flesh has been tamed by discipline and subdued to the spirit, and the vanity and cares of the world despised and abjured. Just as the eye that is blind or closed cannot profit by the light poured upon it, "so the animal man perceiveth not those things which are of the Spirit of God." The reason is, because the "Holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful," that is, from a man of ill-regulated life, neither will He ever have part with the vanity of the world, inasmuch as He is the Spirit of truth. For what society hath the wisdom which is from above with that of the world, which is foolishness in the sight of God, or with that of the flesh, which is the enemy of God?

Anyhow, I suppose the "friend, who cometh to us off his journey," will have no reason to complain of us when he has helped himself to this third loaf of bread. But who shall break it to us? Lo! we have here the Father of the family Himself, as it is written, you shall "know the Lord in the breaking of the bread." Who else but He is capable? As for me, I am not rash enough to undertake such a task. You must, therefore, my brethren, so look upon me as to look

for nothing from me. For I also am one of those who hope, a beggar, like yourselves, for the food of my soul, for a spiritual alms. Poor and needy, I appeal to Him "Who openeth and no man shutteth," begging Him to reveal to us the deep mysteries contained in this Book. "The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord." "The little ones have asked for bread and there is no one to break it unto them." For this we look to Thy gracious mercy. Therefore, O most Loving-kind! break Thy bread to the hungry, by my hands, if it so please Thee, but by Thine own power.

And, first of all, tell us, I beseech Thee, by whom, of whom, and to whom is it said, "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth"? And what means this abruptness, this sudden beginning in the middle of the discourse? For the words are so uttered as if there had been a previous speaker to whom this other is represented as if replying, whoever she is that solicits the kiss. Again, if she requests or demands to be kissed by someone, why ask expressly and explicitly that this be done with the *mouth* and with *his own* mouth, as if it were customary to give such an embrace otherwise, or by proxy? Yet she is not content with saying, "let him kiss me with his *mouth*," but uses the still more unusual expression, "with the *kiss* of his mouth." A pleasant discourse this, surely, which begins with a kiss. In truth, the smiling face, so to speak, of this part of Scripture entices and allures us to read, so that it is a delight to investigate, even with labour, its hidden meanings; for the difficulty of inquiry never wearies when we are charmed by the sweetness of the discourse. Yet who can help having his attention aroused by this beginning without a beginning,

and this novelty of language in an ancient book? Here we have proof that this work is no product of human genius, but composed by the art of the Holy Spirit, in the fact that despite its being so difficult to understand, it is at the same time such a pleasure to study.

But are we to pass over the title? No, my brethren, we must not omit a single iota, since we are commanded to gather up the smallest fragments, lest they be lost. The title runs, "The Beginning of Solomon's Canticle of Canticles." Observe, in the first place, how fitly the name Solomon, which, in the Hebrew, signifies the "Peaceful One," stands at the head of a book which takes its beginning from the token of peace, that is, from a kiss. Notice, also, that such a beginning invites to the understanding of this Canticle only peaceful souls, those, namely, who have succeeded in freeing themselves from the tumult of the passions and the distractions of temporal cares. Nor should the fact that the Book is not called a canticle, but the Canticle of Canticles, be regarded as insignificant. I have, indeed, read many canticles in Sacred Scripture, but none other, as far as I can remember, bearing such a title. Israel sang a hymn to the Lord, after escaping the sword and the yoke of Pharaoh, what time the sea rendered them the double service of delivering them from danger and wreaking vengeance on their enemies. Yet that hymn was not called the Canticle of Canticles. Holy Scripture simply says, if my memory serves me aright, that "Israel sang this song to the Lord." Debbora, too, sang a canticle, as did also Judith, and the mother of Samuel, and several of the prophets. But we do not read that any of these canticles were called the Canticle of Canticles. You will find, I think, that all

those persons sang their songs on account of some benefit bestowed upon themselves or their nation, as for a victory gained, or a danger avoided, or the acquisition of some coveted object. Such singers, therefore, had special motives for their canticles, and sang to show their gratitude for the divine favours, as it is written, "He will confess to Thee when Thou shalt benefit him." But King Solomon, excelling in wisdom, exalted in glory, and secure in peace, is known to have stood in need of no earthly object the acquisition of which would stimulate him to sing this canticle of his. Nor do his own writings anywhere give occasion for such a surmise. We must therefore suppose that, under divine inspiration, he celebrates the praises of Christ and His Church, the grace of heavenly love, and the mysteries of the eternal marriage. He also gives expression to the desires of the holy soul, and exulting in spirit, composed this nuptial song in sweet but figurative language. For, like Moses, he veils his countenance, here, perhaps, not less dazzlingly bright than the Lawgiver's on Mount Sinai, because at that time very few, if any, could endure to gaze upon the glory of his naked face. In my opinion, therefore, this marriage hymn owes its title to its excellence, and with good reason is singularly called the Canticle of Canticles in the same way as He to Whom it is sung is singularly named "King of kings and Lord of lords."

And you, my brethren, if you look back upon your own experience, have not you also sung a new canticle to the Lord, "because He worked wonders," in the victory wherewith your faith "hath vanquished the world," and in your deliverance out of "the pit of misery and the mire of dregs"? Again, when He added

the further grace of setting your feet upon the rock and directing your steps, I am sure that for this indulgence of a new life, your mouths were filled with another "new canticle, a hymn to our God." And when your penitence obtained from Him not only the pardon of your sins but even the promise of reward—did you not with still greater fervour, rejoicing in the hope of future goods, sing your songs "in the ways of the Lord, because great is the glory of the Lord"? And if for any amongst you a mysterious or obscure text of Scripture has sometimes become, on a sudden, luminous with meaning, surely it was a duty to charm the ears of God "with the voice of joy and peace, the sound of one feasting," in return for the alms of heavenly bread bestowed. But even in these daily trials and combats, in which all who live piously in Christ are kept constantly engaged by the world, the flesh, and the devil—thus constantly experiencing in themselves that the life of man upon earth is a warfare—in these also, I say, we find the obligation of daily singing new canticles for victories achieved. As often as a temptation is overcome, or a vice eradicated, or an imminent danger avoided, or a hidden snare discovered, or any deeply rooted and inveterate passion finally and completely vanquished, or some virtue, long and eagerly desired and often asked for, is at last obtained through the grace of God, so often, according to the Prophet, should we sound forth our thanks and praise and bless "God in His gifts" for each benefit received. For, when the Judgment comes, he shall be considered an ingrate who cannot say to God, "Thy justifications were the subject of my song in the place of my pilgrimage."

I think, my brethren, you already recognise in your

own experience those canticles, which in the Psalter are not called the Canticle of Canticles, but the "Canticles of the Steps." For at every advance you make towards perfection, according to the "ascents" which each has "disposed in his heart," a particular canticle has to be sung to the praise and glory of Him Who advances you. I do not see how otherwise can be fulfilled the verse, "A voice of exultation and salvation in the tabernacle of the just." Still less that most beautiful and salutary exhortation of the Apostle, "In psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." But there is one canticle which, by reason of its singular excellence and sweetness, surpasses all those I have mentioned and all others whatsoever. This I would name the Canticle of Canticles, because it is the fruit of all the rest. Grace alone can teach it, nor can it be learned save by experience. It is for the experienced, therefore, to recognise it, and for others to burn with the desire, not so much of knowing, as of feeling it; since this canticle is not a noise made by the mouth but a jubilee of the heart, not a sound of the lips but a tumult of internal joys, not a symphony of voices but a harmony of wills. It is not heard outside, for it sounds not externally. The singer alone can hear it, and He to Whom it is sung, namely, the Bridegroom and the Bride. For it is a nuptial song, celebrating the chaste and joyous embraces of loving hearts, the concord of minds, and the union resulting from reciprocal affection.

Yet this canticle can neither be heard nor sung by souls that are weak and imperfect, and but recently converted from the world, but only by such as are advanced and sufficiently enlightened. For these, by

their progress under the grace of God, have so increased, that they have now come to maturity and to the marriageable age, so to speak, measuring time by merits rather than by years. They are ripe for the mystical nuptials of the Heavenly Bridegroom, as will be more fully explained in its proper place.* Now, it is the hour at which both our poverty and our Rule require us to go forth to manual labour. To-morrow I will resume, in the name of the Lord, my discourse on the mystical kiss, having in to-day's sermon sufficiently expounded the meaning of the title.

* Sermon LXXXIII.

SERMON II

On the Incarnation of Christ, announced by Patriarchs and Prophets.

"Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth."

Whenever I reflect, as I very often do, on the yearning and ardent desires of the fathers for the presence of Christ in the flesh, I am filled with grief and confusion. Even now scarcely can I restrain my tears, so great is the shame I feel at the thought of the tepidity and sloth of these miserable times. For is there one amongst us, my brethren, who derives a satisfaction from the actual fruition of this grace, proportionate to the longing excited in the holy men of old by its mere promise? What multitudes, for instance, will rejoice on the anniversary of the Saviour's Birth, which we shall soon be celebrating? But would to God the cause of their joy were the Divine Nativity, and not rather worldly vanity! It is something of the fathers' yearning and holy expectation I now find enkindled in my soul by those words, "Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth." Such few spiritual persons as could be found in those pre-Christian times, well knew in spirit what grace would be "poured abroad on His Lips." This is the reason why they exclaimed, speaking in the desire of their souls, "Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth." They longed, namely, with an eager longing, for admission to some share in such overflowing sweetness. In truth, every perfect soul under

the old dispensation may be supposed to have complained to God somewhat as follows: "Wherefore dost Thou offer me these 'babbling' * lips of the prophets? Rather let Him Who is 'beautiful above the sons of men'—'let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth.' 'I will not now hear Moses,' for he is become to me 'of a more stammering tongue.' Isaias is a 'man of unclean lips.' Jeremias 'knoweth not how to speak, for he is a child.' All the other prophets, too, lack the power of utterance. Him, Him of Whom they prophesied—let Him speak, 'let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth.' No longer in them, or through them, let Him speak to me, since 'dark are the waters in the clouds of air,' but 'let Him,' in His own Person, 'kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth,' whose grace-giving contact and streams of heavenly doctrine may become in me 'a fountain of living water, springing up into eternal life.' Surely I may expect a more abundant outpouring of graces from Him Whom the Father 'hath anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows'—if only He will condescend to 'kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth.'

* This is the word used in the Douay Version, and renders the common meaning of the Greek original, *σπερμολόγα* (seed-gathering, from *σπέρμα* and *λέγειν*), a term applied to crows to express their scavenging habits, and hence transferred to persons who resembled the crow in any of its characteristics. Thus, in calling St. Paul a "*σπερμολόγος*" (Acts xvii. 18) the Areopagites meant that he was but an idle babbler or gossiper. However, as the word *λέγειν* can mean to speak as well as to gather, *σπερμολόγα* may also be rendered "seminiverbia," as in the Vulgate, which is correctly translated "word-sowing" by the authors of the Rheims Version—quite a beautiful meaning in the present context, as the words of the prophets may be regarded as the seeds of the events predicted. St. Bernard seems to have intended the word in both significations. —(Translator.)

For His word, 'living and efficacious,' is to me as a kiss, not indeed a contact of lips, which sometimes deceives in falsely signifying a union of hearts, but an infusion of joy, a revelation of secrets, a marvellous, and, in a sense, indistinguishable intermingling of the Light Supernal with the enlightened soul." *

Hence, my brethren, that expression of the Apostle, "He that adhereth to the Lord is one spirit with Him." With good reason, therefore, do I refuse visions and dreams; with reason do I decline figures and parables. Even the loveliness of the angelic spirits fails to content me, as falling infinitely short of the comeliness and beauty of my Jesus. It is He, then, Himself, and none other, whether angel or man, that I ask to kiss "me with the kiss of His Mouth." But I am not so presumptuous as to want to be kissed with His *Mouth*—for *that* is the incommunicable happiness and the singular prerogative of His assumed Human Nature. My request is more humble: to be kissed with the *kiss* of His Mouth.

* "Mira quaedam et quodamodo indiscreta commixtio superni Luminis et illuminatae mentis." Similarly, St. Theresa speaking of the spiritual marriage: "I can only say that, as far as one can understand, the soul, I mean the spirit of the soul, is made *one with God*" (*Interior Castle* "Seventh Mansion," chap. xi.). Also, "spiritual marriage is like rain falling from the sky into the river or stream, becoming *one and the same liquid*, so that the river water and the rain cannot be divided. . . . The marriage may also be likened to a room into which the light enters through the windows—though it passes through two the *light is one.*" And St. John of the Cross: "He (God) communicates His own supernatural Being in such a way that the *soul seems to be God Himself* and to possess the things of God." This union must not be confounded with the "deification" of the false mystics, such as Eckhardt and Tauler, in which the creature is said to be so merged in the Creator that it loses its own personality. Eckhardt was condemned by John XXII in 1329.—(Translator.)

This is the privilege of many who can consequently say, "And we all have received of His plenitude."

Now, my brethren, I want your best attention. Let us consider the Word assuming to be the Mouth that kisses; let the Nature assumed be the Mouth that is kissed; and let the Divine Person, subsisting in two Natures, the Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, be the Kiss in which both Mouths co-operate. In this sense, none of the saints would ever presume to say, "Let Him kiss me with His *Mouth*," but only "with the *kiss* of His Mouth," for they reserved the higher privilege to Him to Whom, solely and once and for all, the Mouth of the Word then impressed a kiss when the whole plenitude of the Divinity poured Itself into Him "corporally." O happy Kiss, marvel of infinite condescension, whereby there is not mere pressure of mouth upon mouth, but God is united to man! The contact of lips signifies the embrace of loving hearts; but this union of natures brings together the divine and human, "making peace as to the things on earth and the things that are in heaven"—"For He is our peace Who hath made both one." It is for this Kiss, therefore, that is, for Christ, that every saint of the Old Testament yearned, because they foreknew that His was the inheritance of joy and exultation, that in Him "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were hidden," and they desired for themselves a participation in His fulness.

I believe this interpretation commends itself to you, dear brethren. Now, listen to another. Even the saints who lived before the coming of Our Saviour were not unaware that God entertained thoughts of peace towards the race of mortal men, for He would

not accomplish any of His designs on earth without revealing it to His servants the prophets, as He Himself declared. Yet this word was hidden from many; faith was then not easy to find in the world, and even in the case of most of those who were still "looking for the Redemption of Israel," hope had grown exceedingly weak. Now, the prophets, who foresaw that Christ was to come in the flesh bringing with Him peace, began to proclaim these things. Thus one of them said, "And there shall be peace in our land when He comes." What is more, under divine inspiration, they predicted with all confidence that through Him men were destined to recover the grace of God. John, the Precursor, acknowledged that this prophecy was fulfilled in his own day, saying, "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And now every Christian beholds its fulfilment in his own experience.

But whilst the prophets were thus predicting peace, and the Author of peace still deferred His coming, the people's faith began to waver, "because there was none to redeem or to save." And so they began to complain of the delay. They complained that the Prince of Peace, so often announced, had not yet arrived amongst them, "as He spoke by the mouths of His holy prophets who are from the beginning." Hence they came to doubt the consoling predictions, and demanded the sign or pledge of the promised reconciliation, that is, a kiss. It was as if one of the people should thus address the messengers of peace: "'How long do you hold our souls in suspense?' You have now been predicting peace for a great length of time, and lo! it has not yet appeared. You have promised good things and still there is only confusion. Behold this

very grace, 'at sundry times and in divers manners,' was announced to the fathers by angels and to us by the fathers, who cried 'Peace, peace,' and there was no peace. If God would reassure us as to the sincerity of His good will, so often proclaimed by His legates, but not yet proved by the event, 'let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth,' and thus, by the token of peace, confirm me in my hope of peace. For how can I any longer have faith in mere words? The verbal promise requires confirmation by deeds. Let God prove His envoys truthful—if His envoys they are indeed—by following them Himself, as they promised He would do, because without Him they can do nothing. He has sent His servant, He has sent His staff,* but as yet there is no return of either voice or feeling. I will not arise, I will not awake, I will not shake off the dust, I will not admit hope until the Prophet Himself come down and 'kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth.' Besides, He Who proclaims Himself to be our Mediator with God, is God's own Son, and Himself true God. And 'what is man that He should be made known to him? Or the son of man that He should make account of him?' On the other hand, what is my confidence that I should dare to entrust myself to so awful a Majesty? How, I ask, can I, who am but dust and ashes, presume to think that God hath care of me? Moreover, He loves His Father, but of me or of 'my goods He hath no need.' How, then, can I be sure that He, my Mediator, will not take part against me? Yet if, indeed, as you prophets say, God has resolved to show mercy and is 'thinking of becoming more favourable again,' let him establish a

* Reference to 4 Kings iv. 29.—(Translator)

testament of peace, let Him make an everlasting covenant with me by the 'kiss of His Mouth.' In order that He may not 'make void the words that proceed from His Lips,' let Him 'empty Himself,' let Him humble Himself, let Him stoop down and 'kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth.' If, as Mediator, He would be equally trusted by both parties (God and the sinner) and an object of suspicion to neither, let Him, the Son of God, become man, let Him become the Son of man, and by this kiss establish my confidence. Securely shall I accept the mediation of the Son of God, in Whom I recognise a Brother. As my Brother and my flesh I can no longer regard Him with suspicion. Nor shall He any longer have it in His power to despise me, being bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh."

Thus, therefore, the saints of the old time querulously demanded this holy kiss, that is, the Incarnation of the Word, whilst with the long and weary waiting, faith got tired and was ready to faint, and the fickle people, yielding to impatience, were murmuring against the promises of God. This interpretation, my brethren, I will confess to be but a baseless fancy of my own, if you also do not find it suggested to your minds by the words of Scripture. But surely it was this disappointment, due to the Messias's delay in coming, that called forth cries like the following, expressive of impatience and discontent, "Command, command again! Expect, expect again! A little here, a little there!" And prayers like these, anxious, indeed, but full of fervour: "Give, O Lord, a reward to those who hope in Thee, that Thy prophets may be found faithful." Also, "Stir up, O Lord, the prophecies which the former prophets have spoken in Thy name." To the same

delay must be attributed the joyous and consoling promises: "Behold" the Lord "will appear and will not lie; if He should delay, expect Him, because He shall surely come and shall not be slack"; "Her time (viz., Israel's time of deliverance) is near and her days shall not be lengthened." The next is spoken in the person of the Messias Himself: "Behold, I will bring upon her as it were a river of peace, and as an overflowing torrent the glory of the gentiles." Such expressions reveal clearly to us both the insistence of the preachers and the distrust of the people. Thus, then, the Israelites murmured and their faith was staggered, and, in the words of Isaias, "the angels of peace were weeping bitterly." Hence, as Christ still delayed His advent, lest the whole human race should perish in despair, suspecting that the infirmity of its mortal condition was despised, and lest it should abandon all hope of receiving the promised grace of reconciliation with the Lord, the saints, who had assurance from God in the Spirit, demanded a further assurance from Him present in the flesh; and for the sake of the weak and incredulous, they solicited a kiss with all importunity as the sign of a peace re-established.

O "Root of Jesse, Who standest for an Ensign of the people!" How many kings and prophets have desired to see Thee and have not seen! Happier than all was Simeon whose "old age was crowned with abundant mercy." He exulted in the hope of seeing the Pledge of his desire: "he saw It and rejoiced," and having received the kiss of peace, departed in peace, first proclaiming, however, that Jesus was born as "a Sign which should be contradicted." And his prophecy was justified in the event. Scarcely had the

Sign of peace appeared when It met with contradiction from those, namely, who hate peace. To men of good will It brought true peace, but to the wicked It became "a rock of scandal and a stone of stumbling." So we read, "Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him," because "Jesus came unto His own and His own received Him not." Happy the shepherds, in their nightly watch, who were accounted worthy to behold this Sign! Already was He beginning to hide Himself from the wise and prudent and to reveal Himself to the little ones. Herod also desired to see Him, but not being a man of good will, he did not deserve to have his desire gratified; for the Sign of peace, that is, Jesus, was given only to men of good will. No sign shall be offered to men like Herod "but the sign of Jonas the Prophet." "And this," said the angel to the shepherds, "shall be a Sign to you"—to you who are humble, to you who are obedient, who are not high-minded, who are vigilant, who "meditate day and night on the law of God." "This," he said, "shall be a Sign to you." What? That which angels have promised, which peoples have asked for, which prophets have foretold—*that* the Lord hath now brought to pass and showeth to you. It is the Sign which will bring faith to the incredulous, hope to the despairing, perseverance to the perfect. "This, therefore, shall be a Sign to you." But a Sign of what? A Sign of pardon, a Sign of grace, a Sign of peace that shall have no end. "This," then, "shall be a Sign to you, you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes." Yes, indeed, but in this Infant you shall find the Great Almighty reconciling the world to Himself. "He is to die for your sins and to rise again for your justification,

that justified through faith, you may have peace towards God." This is the Sign of peace which the prophet of old desired King Achaz to ask of the Lord his God, " whether in heaven above or in hell beneath." But the impious monarch refused, miserably disbelieving that in this Sign the lowest depths and the highest heights were to be united in peace. This will be accomplished when Christ, descending into hell, salutes the dwellers there, and to them also gives the pledge of peace in a holy kiss ; and returning thence to heaven, admits the blessed spirits above to the same embrace in everlasting sweetness.

Here I must bring my discourse to an end. But permit me to close with a brief recapitulation. It is evident, then, that this holy Kiss is a necessary condescension to the world, for two reasons : firstly, in order to fortify the faith of the weak ; secondly, in order to gratify the desires of the perfect. It is also plain, I hope, that this mystical Kiss is nothing else than the Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON III

On the Mystical Kiss of the Lord's Feet, Hand, and Mouth.

"Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth."

Our lesson for to-day, my brethren, shall be read from the book of experience. Turn your eyes, therefore, upon yourselves and let each examine his conscience on what I shall have to say. First of all, I should like to know if to any of you it has ever been given to say with sincerity, "Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth." For it is not every man that can speak thus from his heart. But he who has even once received this spiritual kiss from the Lips of Christ, such a one will surely solicit again what he has learned by experience to relish, and will ask that the favour be repeated. In my opinion, no one can even know what it is except him who has experienced it. It is a "hidden manna," for which only he who has eaten still hungers. It is a "sealed fountain," in which "the stranger hath no part" and for which none will thirst save him who has drunk thereof. Listen to one who had enjoyed the experience, soliciting a repetition of the favour. "Render to me," he cries, "the joy of Thy salvation." Far, then, be it from a wretch like me, laden as I am with sins, still the sport of carnal passions, who has never yet tasted the sweetness of the spirit, altogether ignorant of and a stranger to internal delights—far be it from such a one to make any pretensions to a grace so sublime!

However, I will point out to a soul so favoured the position which it becomes her to occupy with regard to her Beloved. Let her not rashly try to reach at once the Lips of her most serene Bridegroom, but rather, like me, let her throw herself in fear at the Feet of her most dread Lord, trembling, and with downcast looks, and not daring, like the Publican, to lift her gaze to heaven. Otherwise, her eyes, accustomed only to darkness, will be in danger of being dazzled by the lights of the spiritual firmament and overwhelmed by the excess of its glory. Or, blinded by the unparalleled splendours of the Divine Majesty, they may be overcast with a cloud of denser darkness than belonged to their former state. O whosoever thou be that art such a soul, do not, I implore thee, do not regard as mean or contemptible that place where the holy Penitent laid aside her sins and clothed herself in the garment of sanctity! There the Ethiopian woman changed her colour, being restored to the whiteness of her long-lost innocence. Then, indeed, she was able to answer those who addressed her in words of reproach, "I am black * but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem." Do you wonder, my brethren, by what art she effected such a change, or by what merits she obtained it? I will tell you in a few words. She "wept bitterly," she heaved deep sighs from her inmost heart, she was agitated interiorly with salutary sobbings, and thus she spat out the venomous humour. The heavenly Physician came

* This seems to contradict what has been said above of the restoration to whiteness. But the contradiction is only apparent. The justified soul, although given back her innocence and so rendered white by grace, may still be regarded as sinful and black by reason of her former guiltiness.—(Translator.)

speedily to her aid, because His "word runneth quickly." Is not the word of God a spiritual medicine? Yes, truly, and a medicine that is "strong and active, searching the heart and the reins." As the Apostle says, "the word of God is living and efficacious and more penetrating than any two-edged sword, reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts." After the example of this blessed Penitent, do thou also, O miserable one, cast thyself down there that thou mayst cease to be miserable. Do thou also prostrate thyself upon the earth, embrace those Feet, appease Them with kisses, bathe Them with thy tears, although thereby not Them but thyself wilt thou be cleansing. So shalt thou be made as one of the "shorn sheep that cometh forth from the washing." Consequently, thou wilt not dare to lift up thy face, overwhelmed with shame and grief, until thou also hearest the consoling words, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"—until thou hearest these others, too, "Arise, arise, O captive daughter of Sion! arise, and shake from thee the dust."

Even after thus impressing the first kiss on the Foot, do not raise thyself immediately to the "kiss of the Mouth." There is another step to be taken before thou canst attain to this, an intervening kiss, which ought to be imprinted on the Hand. The necessity for such a gradual approach may be explained as follows. If Jesus should say to thee, "thy sins are forgiven thee," what would this avail, unless I henceforth abstained from sin? I have put off my tunic; if I again put it on, wherein have I profited? If after washing my feet, I soil them again, what have I gained by the washing? Polluted with sins of every description, I

lay prostrate long in the "mire of the dregs." Yet, it is a worse thing to relapse after purification than never to have been purified at all. For I remember that He Who made me whole said to me, "Behold, thou art made whole; go, now, sin no more lest something worse should happen thee." * But He Who gave me the will to repent must also give me the grace of perseverance. Otherwise I shall repeat the crimes I now repent of, and make my "last state worse than the first." Woe to me, even after my conversion, if He withdraws His Hand, without Whom I can do nothing—absolutely nothing, either towards the recovery or towards the preservation of grace. Hence I hear the Wise Man counselling, "Repeat not a word in prayer." Another cause of fear to me is the threat pronounced by the Judge against the "tree that bringeth not forth good fruit." On account of such considerations, I confess that the first grace, that is, the grace of repentance, does not quite content me. I still require a second grace, which shall enable me to "bring forth fruits worthy of penance," and prevent me from "returning to the vomit."

It behoves me, then, to impetrate the grace of conversion and perseverance before I aspire to things higher and holier. I do not want to reach all at once the summit of sanctity. I prefer to mount thither step by step. God is pleased with the modesty of the penitent in the same degree in which the sinner's boldness offends Him. Thou wilt more easily gain His favour by keeping within due bounds, and by not ambitioning what is too high for thee. From the Feet

* Quoted thus with amplification from John v. 14.—(Translator.)

to the Mouth is a high and difficult leap, and a way of approach not quite becoming. What! Still bestrewn with the ashes of penitence, wilt thou dare to touch those sacred Lips? Only yesterday drawn out of the mire of thy sins, dost thou want to be admitted to-day to the contemplation of the glory of His Countenance? No! thou canst not attain to that sublimity without using the step of His Hand. Let It first cleanse thee, let It lift thee up. How shall It do this? By supplying thee with the merits whereon thou mayst presume. Dost thou ask what these merits are? I will tell thee. They are the works of piety, viz., the beauty of continence and the worthy fruits of penance. By them thou shalt be raised up from the dunghill unto the hope of hearing greater things. Surely in receiving the gifts, thou wilt not forget to kiss the Hand of the Giver. That is, thou must give glory, not to thyself, but to His name. And thou must give Him this glory, not alone for His mercy in pardoning thy sins, but also for His generosity in adorning thee with virtues. Otherwise thou wilt have to see how thou canst harden thy forehead against this sharp-pointed reproach of St. Paul: "What hast thou which thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"

Having thus obtained in these two kisses experimental proof of the divine benevolence, perhaps thou mayst now aspire with security to the third and holier kiss. Confidence increases proportionately with our grace. Hence it is that whilst thou now lovest more ardently, thou dost also ask more confidently for that which thou perceivest to be still wanting to thy fulness. Now, "everyone that asketh, receiveth." Therefore, I

believe that, to one so disposed, this kiss of infinite condescension and indescribable sweetness, whatever it may be, will not be denied. This is the way and this is the order. First, we cast ourselves at the Feet of Christ, and before the Lord Who made us we lament the evils which we ourselves have made. Secondly, we ask the help of His Hand to lift us up and to "strengthen the feeble knees." Thirdly, when we have obtained these favours by many prayers and tears, then, at last—with fear and trembling I say it—perhaps, then, we may venture to raise ourselves to that divinely glorious Mouth, not merely to contemplate Its beauty, but even to enjoy Its kiss. For "Christ is a Spirit before our face," * with Whom we shall be made one Spirit, through His gracious mercy, by uniting ourselves to Him in this holy kiss.

To Thee, Lord Jesus, rightly "to Thee hath my heart said: my face hath sought Thee; Thy Face, O Lord, will I still seek, because Thou didst make me hear Thy mercy in the morning." That is to say, Thou didst pardon my sinful life, when at first I lay prostrate in the dust, kissing Thy venerable Feet. Afterwards, in the course of the day, "Thou didst rejoice the soul of Thy servant," by granting me the grace of well-doing in the kiss of Thy Hand. And now sweet Lord, what remains except graciously to admit

* "Spiritus ante faciem nostram Christus Dominus" (Jer. Lament. iv. 20). In the Vulgate we have "Spiritus oris nostri Christus Dominus," translated in the Douay Version, "The Breath of our mouth, Christ the Lord," which is more in accord with the Greek, Πνεῦμα προσώπου ἡμῶν Χριστὸς κύριος. St. Bernard's reading is found with other Fathers also, for instance with St. Ambrose. Very likely it is taken from the Itala or some other ancient version.—(Translator.)

me even to the kiss of Thy Mouth in the plenitude of light and in fervour of spirit, and so to "fill me with the joy of Thy Countenance"? Show me, O Most Sweet, O Most Amiable, "where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day"! My brethren, "it is good for us to be here," but, behold! the malice of the day * summons us elsewhere. These guests, whose arrival has just been announced, compel me to interrupt rather than conclude so pleasant a discourse. I go to discharge the duties of hospitality, lest anything should be wanting in the exercise of that charity of which I have been speaking, and lest of us also it should be said, "for they say and do not." Do you meantime pray that God may "make pleasing the voluntary offerings of my mouth" for your edification and unto the praise and glory of His Name. Amen.

* Reference to Matthew vi. 34: "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof" (malitia sua). It is assumed in this sermon (see p. 24) that merits or good works are the gift of God. Such is St. Augustine's teaching: "Merita tua, si bona sunt, Dei dona sunt." But if gifts, how merits? St. Bernard explains in chapter xiii. of his book on Grace and Free Will. What is a gift as the fruit of God's free grace, is merit as the fruit of our co-operation.—(Translator.)

SERMON IV

On the Three Stages of the Soul's Progress, symbolised by the Kiss of Christ's Feet, Hand, and Mouth.

"Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth."

Yesterday, my brethren, if you recollect, I treated of the three stages, so to speak, of the soul's journey towards perfection, under the figure of three kisses. The same subject shall occupy me in to-day's discourse, according as God, in His sweetness, shall deign to provide for my poverty. I observed, as you will remember, that those three kisses are given in due order—to the Feet, to the Hand, and to the Mouth of the Bridegroom. By the first we consecrate the beginnings of our conversion, the second is the privilege of proficients, whilst only the few who attain perfection can experience the third. It is from this, which is last in order, that the inspired Book, which I have undertaken to expound, takes its commencement. The two other kisses I have merely introduced on its account, viz., to make its meaning and dignity more clearly intelligible. Whether their introduction is really necessary to this end, it will be for you, my brethren, to judge. To me it seems that the very language of the text invites us to the consideration of these prerequisite embraces. And I shall be surprised if you also do not see that there must be some other kiss or kisses from which that of the mouth is meant to be distinguished by her who

said, "Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth." Otherwise, when it would have sufficed to say, "let Him kiss me," why did she add distinctly and explicitly and against the common custom and usage in speech, "with the kiss of His Mouth"? The only explanation is that thereby she intended to signify that the kiss she asked for, though supreme, was not solitary. In human society the expressions, "kiss me," or "give me a kiss," are familiar enough. But no one ever thinks of adding "with your mouth," or "with the kiss of your mouth." Why? Because when persons embrace in this manner they present their lips to each other, as a matter of course, and without its being expressly asked. For instance, the Evangelist, in narrating how the Traitor was permitted to salute the Lord, simply says, "And he kissed Him," and does not add, "with his mouth" or "with the kiss of his mouth." And such is the custom of all writers and speakers. The threefold distinction of kisses, therefore, corresponds to three states of the soul, or three stages of her progress, fully known and understood only by those who have learned them by experience. And this experience is had when our sins are pardoned, or grace given for practising virtue, or when our merciful and benevolent God unveils His Face to our contemplation, so far as, in this mortal life, our weakness can endure that vision of glory.

I will explain more clearly why I call the first and second of those favours by the name of kisses. We all know that a kiss is a sign of peace. Now, as Holy Scripture says, "our sins separate us from God." If, then, we break down this wall of separation there shall be peace. Hence, when we remove, by penance,

the obstruction of sin and are reconciled, how can I more suitably describe the forgiveness we obtain than by naming it the kiss of peace? Yet it is only the Feet we should now presume to kiss. That is to say, our penance ought to be humble and shy, as making reparation for the pride of our former transgressions. But when, later on, we have been admitted to a certain sweet familiarity by a more abundant infusion of grace, whereby we are enabled to live more purely and to converse more worthily with God, then we may lift up our heads with greater confidence, in order to kiss the Hand of our Benefactor, as is the custom amongst men. Yet we do this then only when we seek in the grace bestowed, not our own glory, but the glory of the Giver, ascribing to His bounty, rather than to any merit of our own, all that we receive. For if you glory not in Him but in yourselves, what is that but kissing your own hand rather than the Hand of the Lord? And this, according to holy Job, is "a very great iniquity and a denial against the Most High God." Now, if, as Holy Scripture testifies, to seek one's own glory is to kiss one's own hand, it follows that he who seeks the glory of God may rightly be said to kiss His Hand. What I have said is paralleled even in human customs. Thus, servants, when begging pardon of their offended masters, are wont to kiss their feet, whereas the poor kiss the hand of the rich whenever they receive an alms.

However, as God is a Spirit, a simple Substance with no distinction of corporeal members, there may be some who will raise objections to what I have been saying. I may be challenged to show that the Deity has and Feet which can be kissed in the way I have

described. But what if I, in my turn, ask such critics to explain to me how the words of Scripture concerning this kiss of the Mouth are to be understood of God? For in whatever sense He may be said to possess a Mouth, in the same I may speak of Him as having Hands and Feet. And, contrariwise, in so far as He lacks the latter members, He lacks the former, too. But, in truth, God has a Mouth by which He "teaches men knowledge," and He has Hands by which He gives "food to all flesh," and He has Feet whereof the "earth is the footstool"—which signifies that sinners of the earth turn to these Feet, and prostrating themselves there, make due satisfaction. All such members and faculties, I say, God possesses, not formally or materially, but spiritually and virtually. Assuredly, no one will deny that humble contrition finds in Him something answering to feet, before which it may cast itself down; that fervent devotion finds something answering to hands, which strengthens it by renewing its vigour; that joyous contemplation, too, finds something corresponding to a mouth, which, as by a kiss, gives content and rest to its rapturous love. He is all things to all Who governs all, and yet is not properly any of all For, as He is in Himself, "He dwelleth in light inaccessible," and His "peace surpasseth all understanding," and "of His wisdom there is no number," and "of His greatness there is no end." Neither can any "man see Him and live." Not, indeed, that He is far from any of His creatures, for He is, in a sense, the Being of all, without Whom all are nothing; but because—and this will increase your astonishment—just as there is nothing more intimate to us than He, so is there nothing more incomprehensible. What, I ask, is more intimate to

each than his being ? Yet what more incomprehensible than the Being of all things ? Of course, I am speaking of God as the Being of all His creatures, not in the sense that they are what He is, but because "from Him, and by Him, and in Him are all." The Creator, then, is the Being of all that He has made, but efficiently, not formally. It is thus that the Divine Majesty condescends to be to His creatures, the Being of all that are, the Life of all that live, the Light of all that think, the Virtue of all who use that Light well, and the Crown of all who conquer. And in creating, governing, administering, moving, predetermining, renewing, establishing these various orders of things, He has need of no corporeal instruments, Who, with a single word, created all things, material and immaterial. Human souls require bodies and bodily senses in order to know and to act upon each other. Not so the Almighty. From His own Will exclusively He derives the energy required for producing creatures and ordering them as He pleases. His power reaches to whatsoever He wills, and as He wills, without need or use for corporeal members. Or do you suppose that He depends on the service of a bodily sense to contemplate the things which His Hands have made ? No ! He is the Light omnipresent which nothing can ever escape, yet He needs not the ministry of sensitive faculties to put Him in possession of knowledge. And not alone does He know all things without a bodily medium, but also, without a bodily medium He reveals Himself to the clean of heart. I will enlarge upon this in order to make it plainer. But as the time that remains is too short to allow me to say all I have to say, it will be wiser to reserve the rest until to-morrow.

SERMON V

On the Four Orders of Spirits.

"Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth."

There are, as you know, my brethren, four distinct kinds of spirits, the irrational, the human, the angelic, and the Divine, the last being the Creator of all the others. Of these various orders, there is none but requires a body, natural or assumed, either for its own use, or for the needs of others, or for the sake both of itself and others—none, save the fourth, to Whom all creatures, whether corporeal or incorporeal, truly confess and say, "Thou art my God, because Thou dost not need my goods." In the first place, it is evident that the irrational spirit is so dependent on its body that without its support it cannot exist at all. When the brute dies its spirit ceases to be at the same moment at which it ceases to vivify. Our spirits, on the other hand, survive our bodies; yet to those things which make life really happy, we have no means of attaining except through the bodies. This truth was not unknown to him who said, "The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." For "the things that are made," that is, those corporeal and visible things, cannot enter into our knowledge except through the avenues of our bodily senses. The human soul, therefore, spiritual creature though she be, has need of a body, as without the help of this she could never acquire that science

which, like a ladder, enables her to mount up to those higher realities, in the contemplation of which she finds her happiness. Here the case of infants who die soon after baptism may be urged against me as an objection. Our faith teaches us that the souls of such, departing the present life without the knowledge of sensible things are, nevertheless, admitted to the bliss of heaven. I answer briefly that they have this, not as a right from nature, but as a privilege from grace. Hence, as I am speaking now only of what happens in the ordinary course and by natural law, no argument against me can be derived from such extraordinary interpositions.

That bodies are necessary, even to angelic spirits, is sufficiently evident from that true and truly inspired utterance of the Apostle: "Are they not ministering spirits, sent to minister for those who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" How, therefore, could they exercise their ministry without bodies, especially with regard to those who dwell in bodies? Moreover, it is only bodily substances * that can traverse space, and pass from one point to another. Yet we have it on authority, as indubitable as well known, that the angels frequently do this. Hence it is that they appeared to the fathers, entered their dwellings, eat with them, and had their feet washed. Thus, both

* This opinion, now abandoned, has been defended by philosophers before and after St. Bernard. Even Aristotle himself distinctly teaches that the indivisible is *per se* incapable of locomotion. Indeed, it seems to have been this difficulty of conceiving how that which has no extension in space, can yet, of itself, pass from one point of space to another, that led so many doctors to regard the angelic nature as essentially material. And hence, when the latter view lost favour, the former was also discredited. For the various scholastic theories of angelic locomotion, see Suarez, *De Angelis*, Bk. IV. chap. i.-xxiv.—(Translator.)

the angelic and the brute spirit have need of bodies, but rather as instruments to be employed for the good of others than as sources of benefit to themselves. The brute, as under a natural law of slavery, subserves human interests by ministering to our temporal and corporeal necessities. Consequently, its spirit passes with time and is extinguished with the body; for "the slave abideth not in the house for ever." Yet if we use the slave as we ought, we shall turn the benefit of its temporal service into merit for ourselves of an eternal reward. But the angels, in the spirit of liberty, are anxiously solicitous to exercise towards us the offices of piety, and show themselves to mortals as willing and eager ministers "of future goods," recognising in us their predestined companions for eternity and the co-heirs of their own immortal felicity. The irrational spirits, therefore, serve us from necessity, the angelic out of love; and, doubtless, it is as a means of benefiting us that both have need of bodies. What advantage they themselves derive therefrom, I am unable to see—at any rate with regard to eternity. The brute, indeed, by means of the body, is able to perceive corporeal objects. But surely it has not the power, by the help of such material and concrete impressions as bodily senses supply, to raise itself to the perception of spiritual and intellectual realities. Nevertheless, whilst unable itself to attain to such knowledge, it helps thereto, as we know, by its corporeal and temporal service, those amongst men who strive to draw eternal profit from the use of all transitory things, "using the world as though they used it not."

But the blessed angels above, without the aid of a

body and without the intuition of objects perceptible to bodily senses, by the mere spirituality and subtlety of their natures, are capable alike of comprehending what is most exalted and of penetrating what is most profound. The Apostle evidently realised this, because after saying that "the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made," he immediately added, "by the creature of the world," that is, of the earth.* He thus indicates that the same is not true of the creatures of heaven. For those objects of contemplation to which the human spirit, imprisoned in the flesh and dwelling here below, endeavours to rise, little by little and step by step, from the consideration of material things, the same are reached swiftly and easily by the angelic citizens of heaven, owing to their native sublimity and penetration, without any dependence on corporeal sense, without any assistance from bodily members, without any intuition of material things. Why should they seek in bodies for those spiritual communications which they can read in the Book of Life without any contradiction, and understand without any difficulty? Why should they labour in the sweat of their brow to winnow the grain from the chaff, to press out the wine from the grapes, or the oil from the olives, when they have an abundance and a superabundance of such things ready to hand? Who, having plenty at home, would beg his bread from door to door? Who would dig a well and laboriously search for water in the bowels of the earth, whilst a living, natural fountain poured its limpid

* So the holy Preacher interprets the expression "a creatura mundi," which indeed can bear this translation, although the usual rendering is "from the creation of the world." The Greek is equally ambiguous.—(Translator.)

treasures with unfailing generosity at his feet? Therefore, neither the angelic nor irrational spirits derive any assistance from their bodies as regards the acquisition of that knowledge which can make the intelligent creature happy. The latter, as being naturally stupid, lack the capacity for such enlightenment; the former, as enjoying the prerogative of a more excellent glory, have no need of it. But the spirit of man, occupying the middle place between the angelic and the brute, has need of a body for its own advancement in knowledge and for rendering service to others. Thus, to say nothing of the other bodily members or their functions, how, I ask, could instruction be imparted without a corporeal tongue, or attended to without corporeal ears?

As, therefore, without the help of a body the servile spirit of the brute cannot discharge the duty of its condition, nor the heavenly and angelic exercise the offices of piety, nor the rational spirit of man suffice to consult for its own or its neighbour's salvation, it follows that every created spirit requires the agency of bodily members, either solely on account of others or for the sake both of itself and others. But what if there be found some irrational creatures of which we can discover no use and which minister to no human necessity? I answer that, although not otherwise useful, they render us more important service by furnishing objects of contemplation to our minds, than they could possibly do by supplying the needs of our body. Even allowing that some are dangerous and detrimental to man's material well-being, still their bodies do not lack wherewith to "co-operate unto good to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be

saints." And if they do not serve us by becoming our food, or by otherwise accomplishing our purposes, they do so, at least, by exercising our intelligence, according to that measure and method of instruction, common to all who enjoy the use of reason, whereby the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." The devil and his satellites are, indeed, always intent on evil and always desire our hurt. But God forbid that they should have the power to harm those who are "zealous of good," to whom it is said, "and who is he that can hurt you if you be zealous of good?" Rather they benefit them, even in spite of themselves, and "co-operate unto good" for those who are themselves good.

As to whether the angelic bodies,* like the human, are naturally united to their indwelling spirits, so that the angel, just as man, is an animal, only differing from us in being immortal, which we are not as yet; whether these celestial creatures can change their bodies at their pleasure, and appear, when they wish to appear, in whatever shape and form they like, condensing and solidifying as they please the material envelopes which, nevertheless, in their own real nature by reason of the subtlety of their essence are entirely impalpable and imperceptible to our senses; or whether, finally, they subsist as simple spiritual substances, which, when they have need, assume to themselves a body, and lay it down

* The Saint's uncertainty as to whether the angels are pure spirits (expressed also in the *De Consideratione*, Bk. V. c. IV.), will not surprise us when we remember that in his time this question was still an open one, with grave authorities on either side. Now, however, the consensus of theologians has settled the question in favour of immateriality.—(Translator.)

again, when no longer necessary, to be dissolved into the elements whence it was formed—to these questions, my brethren, do not look to me for an answer. The fathers seem to have held different views on the matter. And for myself, I confess I do not see my way clear to teach one thing or the other. However, I do not suppose that knowledge of this kind would contribute much towards our advancement in virtue.

Yet be assured of this, that no created spirit can directly act upon our souls. I mean to say, that without the medium of a bodily instrument, whether its own or ours, no creature has the power of so communicating and infusing itself into our minds as thereby to render us learned or more learned, virtuous or more virtuous.* No angelic, no human spirit is capable of affecting me in this way, any more than I am capable of so affecting them. The blessed angels have not even this power with regard to each other. It is, therefore, the incommunicable prerogative of that supreme and all-pervading Spirit, Who alone "teacheth knowledge" to angels and men, without requiring on the creature's side the medium of a bodily ear, or on His own the instrumenta-

* Quoted by Suarez, *De Angelis*, Bk. VI. chap. xvi., as confirmatory of his thesis that angels can act upon the human mind only indirectly, through the medium of the imagination. St. Bernard expresses himself more clearly on this question in his work *De Consideratione*, Bk. V. chap. v., where he says that "an angel is present to the soul not as working good in her, but merely as suggesting good thoughts; not as making her virtuous, but only as inciting her to virtue. But the Divine Indwelling affects the soul immediately by an infusion of graces, or rather by an infusion and communication of the Divine Substance Itself, so that God may be said to be one spirit with ours, although not one person or one substance. The angel, therefore, is *with* the soul, but God is *in* her. The angel is present as the soul's companion, God as her life."—(Translator.)

lity of a material tongue. This Divine Spirit communicates Himself directly, He reveals Himself directly, and pure Himself, is readily perceived by pure minds. He alone has need of nothing, being alone sufficient for Himself, and, in virtue of His omnipotent Will, for all besides. Nevertheless, He exercises great and innumerable operations by means of His subject creatures, material and immaterial. But He does so rather as commanding than as soliciting. See, for example, how He makes use now of my corporeal tongue to do His work in instructing you, although He could, doubtless, instruct you Himself directly with infinitely greater facility and sweetness. His employment of my agency is, therefore, not a dependence on, but a condescension to me. So in promoting your spiritual interests by my means what He seeks is not assistance for Himself but merit for me.

Such, my brethren, must be the conviction of every man engaged in doing good, lest perchance he should begin to glory in himself on account of the gifts of God, instead of glorying in the Lord. Yet there are some who do good against their will, namely, wicked men and fallen angels. In this case, it is clear the good that is done by their means is not done for their sakes, since no goodness can benefit a free agent without his consent. Hence such unwilling instruments have but the dispensation of whatever good they perform. Yet somehow or other, we experience greater satisfaction and pleasure in the benefits conferred upon us by these wicked dispensers than in any others. And perhaps this is the reason why God makes use of the wicked to benefit the just, rather than any need He has of their co-operation in well-doing.

If the Almighty stands in no need of angels or men,

much less, doubtless, does He depend on creatures which lack either reason alone or both sense and reason. Consequently, their concurrence in good makes it apparent how "all things serve Him," Who can truly say, "The earth is Mine." Or at any rate, it may be said that He employs such agencies, not because He needs their help, but only for reasons of fitness, as knowing from what particular causes particular effects might most fittingly proceed. Whilst, then, the ministry of bodies is often and suitably exercised in accomplishing the divine purposes, as, for instance, in quickening seed, in multiplying crops, and in ripening fruit, what need has He of a body of His own, Whose will is manifestly obeyed by all bodies, celestial and terrestrial, without distinction as without delay? Such a body, surely, would be superfluous in Him Who finds no body not His own. But to say all that occurs to be said on this subject would prolong this discourse beyond all reasonable limits, and perhaps overtax the powers of some of you. Let us, therefore, reserve what remains for another sermon.*

* In this sermon the Saint seems to contradict himself, in one place positively affirming that the angels have need of bodies, and in another confessing his ignorance. But the two positions are quite consistent. He is certain that the angels require a body to act on matter—which is the common opinion; his doubt concerns the question as to whether bodies belong to their essential constitution.—(Translator.)

SERMON VI

On the Kiss of the Lord's Feet.

"Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth."

In order to connect the present with my last discourse, I wish you, my brethren, to recall what I said yesterday, namely, that only the supreme and all-pervading Spirit is independent of bodily service and agency in all that He wills to do or to be done. Let us, then, confidently vindicate for God alone a perfect immateriality, just as in Him alone we recognise a perfect immortality.* Let us be convinced that He alone amongst all spirits transcends corporeal nature to such an extent, that for no operation whatsoever is He in any sense dependent on material instruments. His mere spiritual *fiat* is adequate to the accomplishment of all He wills to effect and when He wills. Therefore, that Divine Majesty alone stands in need of no co-operation of bodily members either for His own sake or for the sake of His creatures. To His almighty Will accomplishment always answers promptly and

* The Saint evidently means that God alone possesses both intrinsic and extrinsic immortality. The former, common to all spiritual substances, is simply immunity from death by corruption of essence. The latter means indestructibility by external force, and is incommunicable to creatures, being but another name for self-existence. St. Thomas (*Summ. Theol.*, p. I. q. LI.) comments on this passage, and shows that it does not necessarily exclude the view of the immateriality of the angels.—(Translator.)

immediately, everything exalted bends, everything contrary yields, everything created renders obedience, without His requiring thereto the assistance of any intermediate agency, spiritual or corporeal. Without a tongue He teaches and admonishes, without hands He gives and holds, without feet He runs to the help of those who are perishing. So He acted even with the generations of the olden time. Men were constantly enjoying His benefits, but of their Benefactor Himself, they had no knowledge. Even then was He "reaching from end to end mightily"; yet they did not observe Him, because He was at the same time "disposing all things sweetly." And so they rejoiced in the gifts of God, whilst the Lord of the Sabbath, as judging all with tranquillity, remained entirely unknown and unnoticed. From Him they were, but they were not with Him. By Him they lived, but they lived not to Him. From Him they had understanding, but not of Him, apostates, ingrates, fools that they were! Hence it came to pass that they attributed their being, their life, and their intelligence, not to the Creator, but some to nature, others more stupidly, to chance. Many also ascribed to their own industry and virtue what were but multiplied gifts from above. The evil spirits, too, by their own craft, were credited with the authorship of innumerable divine benefactions, as well as the sun and moon, the earth and the water, and even the works of human hands! Plants, trees, the most minute and contemptible seeds were worshipped as gods!

Alas, my brethren, it was thus that men lost and "changed their glory into the likeness of a calf that eateth grass"! But God, compassionating their ignor-

ance, deigned to issue forth from His hill of clouds and shadows and "hath set His tabernacle in the sun." He presented Himself in flesh to those who relished only things of the flesh, in order thereby to lead them to relish the things of the spirit. For whilst in the flesh He did not the works of the flesh, but the works of God, commanding nature, over-ruling her laws, stultifying the wisdom of men, and beating down the tyranny of demons; and in this way He clearly showed that it was by His power such miracles had ever been performed, even in the times previous to His coming. Thus, I say, by publicly and powerfully working wonders, in the flesh and by the flesh, by announcing the truths of salvation, and by enduring the indignities of His Passion, He made it plainly manifest that it was He Who powerfully, if invisibly, created the world, Who wisely governs it and lovingly protects it. And when He preached the Gospel to the ungrateful, and offered signs to unbelievers, and prayed for His executioners, did He not thus evidently indicate that He is the same Who, with the Father, makes His sun to rise daily "on the good and the wicked and rains upon the just and the unjust"? This is what He said Himself: "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not."

Behold, my brethren, He Who without words teaches the angels in heaven, now opens His Mouth of flesh to teach the disciples on the mount! Behold, at the touch of His corporeal Hand, lepers are cleansed, sight is given to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and the sinking Apostle is raised to security; and thus He stands revealed as the Benefactor to Whom the Prophet David had said long before,

"Thou openest Thy Hand and fillest with blessing every living creature," and, "When Thou openest Thy Hand they shall all be filled with good." Behold, the Magdalen, now penitent and prostrate at His Feet of flesh, hears the sentence of pardon, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." And by this she recognises Him of Whom she had read what was written centuries earlier, "The devil shall go out before His Feet." For where her sins were pardoned, there doubtless the devil was expelled from her heart. Hence, the Saviour said, speaking generally of all penitents, "Now is the judgment of the world, now the prince of this world shall be cast out." That is to say, God will forgive sins when humbly confessed, and so Satan shall lose the dominion which he had usurped over the sinner's heart.

Again, He walks on the waves with His bodily Feet, as the Prophet sang of Him before He had as yet revealed Himself in the flesh, "Thy way is in the sea and Thy paths in many waters." As if he should say, "Thou shalt trample down the swelling ambitions of the proud, and bridle the fluctuating passions of the flesh," which, indeed, He does by justifying the wicked and humbling the high-minded. Yet, because this is done invisibly, the carnal man cannot perceive by Whom it is accomplished. Hence the Psalmist adds, "and Thy footsteps shall not be known." Hence, also, the Father said to the Son, "Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool," that is, "until I make all who despise Thee submit to Thy will, either unwillingly and to their destruction, or voluntarily and to their bliss." But this work of the Spirit was not perceptible to flesh, for "the sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God."

Therefore it was necessary that the contrite Magdalen should prostrate herself bodily at His bodily Feet, and, kissing these same Feet with her bodily lips, so obtain the pardon of her sins. And thus can "this change of the Right Hand of the Most High," whereby He marvellously, though invisibly, justifies the impious, be made manifest even to carnal minds.

I must not, however, pass over those spiritual Feet of the Lord, which it is necessary that the penitent should, in the first place, kiss spiritually. For well I know, my brethren, how piously curious you are with regard to such matters, and how you would like to let nothing go unscrutinised. Nor does it seem to me that we should gain nothing by knowing what are those Feet, wherewith Holy Scripture represents God at one time as standing, as in the verse, "We shall adore in the place where His Feet have stood"; at another as walking: "I will dwell with them and will walk amongst them"; and at still another as running: "He exulted as a giant to run His course." If, then, the Apostle considered it right to refer the Head* of Christ to His Divinity, it ought not to appear unreasonable in me if I understand His Feet as signifying His Humanity. These Feet I consider to be mercy and justice. The two words are familiar enough to you. They occur together, if you remember, in numerous passages of Scripture. Now, that the Lord assumed the Foot of mercy together with the Flesh to which He is united, is evident from the Epistle to the Hebrews.

* The allusion is to 1 Cor. xi. 3: "But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." The Saint's interpretation is merely an accommodation.—(Translator.)

Therein we read that Christ "was tempted in all things like as we are, without sin," "that *He might become merciful*." As regards the second Foot, which I take to mean justice, does not the Incarnate Word Himself plainly imply that it also was assumed with and belongs to the Humanity, where He declares that the Father has given Him "power to do judgment *because* He is the Son of Man"?

Moving evenly, therefore, on these two spiritual Feet, under the guidance of the Divinity as Head, the invisible Emmanuel, "born of a woman, made under the law," revealed Himself on earth and conversed amongst men. With these same Feet He is still, though spiritually now and invisibly, "going about doing good and healing all that are oppressed by the devil." With these, I say, He walks through living souls, constantly illuminating them, and searching the "hearts and reins" of the faithful. But, see, lest perchance these should be the Legs of the Bridegroom, which, in a following verse, the Bride praises so magnificently, comparing them, if I remember aright, to "pillars of marble, set upon bases of gold." This description is extremely beautiful, because "mercy and truth," that is to say, justice, signified by the Legs, "have met" in the Incarnate Wisdom of God, and gold is the symbol of wisdom. Furthermore, "All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth."

Happy the man, my brethren, in whose soul the Lord Jesus sets both these Feet of His! By two signs you may recognise him, for one so privileged must of necessity bear upon him the impress of the divine footsteps. These footprints are hope and fear; the latter impressed by justice, the former by mercy. Truly "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, and

in them that hope in His mercy," because "fear is the beginning of wisdom," as hope is its development. As for the consummation of wisdom, we must pronounce that to be charity. Such being the case, you will understand that there is no small advantage in this first kiss, which is given to the Feet. Only you have to make sure of kissing both, omitting neither. When you feel a sincere sorrow for your sins, and a fear of the divine judgment, you have pressed your lips to the Foot of truth and justice. And if you moderate your terror and grief by the consideration of the divine goodness and by the hope of obtaining pardon, be assured that you have also kissed the Foot of mercy. But to kiss one without the other is not expedient. The thought of justice alone will cast you into the gulf of despair, whilst a deceptive reliance on mercy will engender a most dangerous sense of security.

Even to me, miserable as I am, it has sometimes been given to sit at the Feet of the Lord Jesus, and to embrace, with all devotion, now one, now the other, in so far as His gracious mercy deigned to permit. But whenever, under the sting of my conscience, I lost sight of the divine mercy, and clung a little too long to the Foot of justice, immediately I became oppressed with an indescribable terror and a miserable confusion, and, enveloped in a most horrible darkness, I could only cry tremblingly "from out of the depths," "Who knoweth the power of Thy anger, and for Thy fear can number Thy wrath?" Yet if, leaving the Foot of justice, I should chance to lay hold on that of mercy, such carelessness and negligence took instant possession of me, that I straightway grew more tepid at prayer, more slothful at work, more ready for

laughter, more imprudent in speech—in short, my whole being, body and soul, showed evidence of greater inconstancy. Therefore, taught by experience, no longer judgment alone or mercy alone, but both "mercy and judgment I will sing to Thee, O Lord." "Thy justifications I will never forget." Both these, Thy mercy and Thy justice, shall be "the subjects of my song in the place of my pilgrimage," until, mercy having been exalted over justice, misery "shall shut her mouth," so that thenceforward only "my glory may sing to Thee and I shall not regret."

SERMON VII

On the Love of the Spouse, and on the Attention due to the Word of God.

"Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth."

I have brought trouble upon myself, my brethren, by needlessly exciting your pious curiosity. Because, in connexion with the first kiss, I was at pains to explain, and at unnecessary length, the spiritual Feet of the Lord, with their special names and significations, you are now anxious for an explanation of the Hand which, as I have said, must be kissed in the second place. Well, I am not unwilling to gratify your wishes. Nay, I will speak not of one Hand, but of two, and will give to each its proper name. Let the one be called Liberality, the other Fortitude. With the former God gives abundantly, with the latter He protects what He has bestowed. If we are not to be reputed ingrates, we shall kiss both, by acknowledging and proclaiming Him, not only as the Author of all good, but as the Preserver of the same. Let this suffice for the first and the second kiss. We must now proceed to the consideration of the third.

"Let Him kiss me," she says, "with the kiss of His Mouth." Who is she that makes the request? It is the Spouse. But who is this Spouse? The Spouse here, my brethren, is the soul that thirsts after God. I will now run over the various species and manifestations of human affection or disposition, in order that you may the more clearly perceive which one

appertains to the Spouse. If thou be a slave, thou dost fear the face of thy lord; if thou be a mercenary, thou dost hope to receive thine hire at his hands; if thou be a disciple, thou dost attend to the instructions of thy master; if thou be a son, thou dost honour him who is thy father; but if thou be a lover, thou wilt ask thy beloved for a kiss. Amongst the natural emotions of the human soul, this affection of love holds the first place, especially when it reverts to its first Principle, which is God. No words can be found sweet enough to convey an idea of the tenderness of the mutual affection of the Divine Word and the soul, except the names Bridegroom and Bride. For persons so related have all things in common. Nothing can be either appropriated to the one or sequestered from the other. They must have one and the same inheritance, one and the same hearth and home, one and the same table, in a word, they are one and the same flesh. So it is written, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, for they shall be two in one flesh." And the Bride, on her side, is commanded to "forget her people and her father's house," in order that the Bridegroom may "desire her beauty." Since, therefore, love belongs especially and chiefly to persons espoused, the name of Spouse or Bride may justly be given to the soul that loves God. Now, the soul that asks a kiss is the soul that loves. She petitions not for liberty, not for a reward, not for an inheritance, not even for knowledge, but only for a kiss. And this request she makes after the manner of a most chaste spouse, burning with a most holy love, and altogether powerless to conceal the flame which consumes her. See with what impatient abrupt-

ness she begins her speech. Although she is about to solicit a great privilege from a great Personage, she does not, as others are wont to do in similar circumstances, make use of the arts of blandishments; she does not approach her object by any winding ways or circumlocutions. There is no preface, no attempt to conciliate favour. From the abundance of her heart, without shame or shyness, she breaks out with the eager request, "Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth." Does she not seem to you to say clearly, "What have I in heaven and besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth?" Assuredly, she loves with a pure love, who seeks nothing of Him Whom she loves, but only Himself. She loves with a holy love, because her love springs not from the passions of the flesh, but from the purity of the Spirit. She loves with an ardent love who is so inebriated with love as to lose sight of the Majesty of her Beloved. What! "He looketh upon the earth and maketh it tremble," and she dares to ask that He should kiss her! Is she not manifestly intoxicated? No doubt of it. And perchance when she cried out thus impetuously she had just come forth from the "wine-cellar," into which, namely, she afterwards boasts of having been introduced. So David, speaking of certain souls, said to God, "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure." Oh, how mighty is the power of love! How great confidence in liberty of spirit! What can be plainer than that perfect love "casteth out fear"?

Yet from modesty she addresses her request, not to the Spouse Himself, but to others, as it were, in His absence. "Let Him kiss me," she exclaims, "with the kiss

of His Mouth." An extraordinary petition, to be sure, and one needing the companionship of modesty to commend the petitioner. Consequently she seeks through domestics and familiars for admission to the sanctuary, and access to the Object of her love. But who, my brethren, are these domestics and familiars? We believe that the holy angels stand near us when we pray and offer to God our petitions and desires. But only when they see us lifting up pure hands to heaven, without any feelings of anger or dissension in our hearts. This is evident from the words of the Angel to Tobias: "When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and hide the dead by day in thy house and bury them by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord." The same, as I think, can be also sufficiently established by other passages from Scripture. Thus, that the angels, by condescension, are even wont to associate themselves with us when we are singing psalms to the Lord, is clearly indicated by the Prophet, where he says, "Princes went before joined with singers, in the midst of young damsels playing on timbrels." Hence also his words, "In the sight of the angels I will sing to Thee." It is, therefore, a cause of grief to me that some of you allow yourselves to be oppressed with a heavy drowsiness during the holy vigils, and so fail in reverence for these citizens of heaven, appearing as dead men in the presence of the princes. Whenever they are attracted by your fervent alacrity, they take great pleasure in assisting at our solemnities. But I fear, lest, disgusted at your sloth, they may sometimes retire * in anger,

* Commenting on these words, Blessed Albert the Great tells us not to understand them as signifying that men are some-

and then, all too late, each of you should begin to say to God with tears, "Thou hast put away my acquaintance far from me: they have set me an abomination to themselves." Also, "Friend and neighbour Thou hast put far from me, and my acquaintance, because of my misery." Likewise, "My friends and my neighbours have drawn near and stood against me, and they that were near me stood afar off, and they that sought my soul used violence." For if the good angels withdraw from us, who will be able to resist the assaults of the malignant? I say, therefore, to him who thus yields to sloth, "cursed be he that doth the work of God negligently." And it is not I but the Lord Who says, "I would thou wert cold or hot, but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of My Mouth." Be attentive, then, my brethren, to these angelic princes, when you are engaged in prayer or psalmody; comport yourselves with reverence and modesty, and glory in the knowledge that your angels daily "see the Face of your Father." Being "sent to minister for them that shall receive the inheritance of salvation," they ascend to God to offer Him our devotions, and return to us laden with His graces. Let us profit by the ministrations of those celestial spirits who honour us with their company, so that praise may be "perfected out of the mouths of infants and sucklings." Let us say to them, "Sing praises to our

times abandoned by their angel guardians, in punishment of their infidelities. St. Bernard, he says, only means that sin may render our angels less zealous or less efficacious in assisting us. Similarly, Suarez, *De Angelis*, Bk. VI. chap. xvii.—(Translator.)

God, sing ye," and let us hear them, in turn, answering, "Sing praises to our King, sing ye."

Since, therefore, it is your privilege to sing the praises of God in common with the heavenly choristers, as being "fellow-citizens with the saints and domestics of God," "sing ye wisely." As sweet food is pleasing to the palate, so is a psalm to the heart. Only let the devout and prudent soul be careful to grind it with the teeth of her intelligence, if I may use the expression, and not gulp it down whole and unmasticated, for otherwise the spiritual palate cannot enjoy the taste, pleasant and "sweet above honey and the honey-comb." Let us offer Christ a honey-comb, like the Apostles, at the celestial banquet and the table of the Lord. Just as the honey is found in the comb, so should devotion be felt in the words, for "the letter killeth" if swallowed down without this seasoning of the Spirit. But if, like St. Paul, you "sing in the spirit, and sing also with the understanding," you, too, shall recognise the truth of what Jesus said, "The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life." You shall likewise understand the saying of Wisdom, "My Spirit is sweet above honey." So "shall your soul be delighted in fatness," and "your whole burnt-offering be made fat." So shall you appease the King, and gain the favour of His princes, and secure to yourselves the good will of all the heavenly court. The blessed above, "smelling a sweet savour" in heaven, shall say of you also, "Who is she that goeth up by the desert as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer?" As David sings, "The princes of Juda are their leaders, the princes of Zabulon, the

princes of Nephthali." That is to say, the angels act as leaders for those who sing the praises of God, who observe continence, and are given to divine contemplation. For well do these our princes know how pleasing to their King are the laudation of our psalmody, the constancy of our temperance, and the purity of our contemplation. Hence they are careful to demand from us such first-fruits of the Spirit, which are really nothing else than the first and fairest fruits of wisdom. You are aware, of course, that Juda signifies in the Hebrew "one praising or confessing," Zabulon "the dwelling of strength," and Nephthali "the stag set free." The stag, indeed, by reason of his agility and powers of leaping, is a figure which admirably expresses the spiritual ecstasies of the contemplative. Also, just as that animal is wont to penetrate the shadows of the forest, so is the contemplative accustomed to pierce through the obscurity of mystical meanings.

4 We know, too, my brethren, Who it was that said "The sacrifice of praise shall honour Me." But as "praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner," is it not of absolute necessity that it should be accompanied by the virtue of continence, which will secure that "sin shall not reign in your mortal body"? Yet that continence which seeks human glory, has no merit in the eyes of God. Indispensably necessary, therefore, is purity of intention, whereby the soul has the wish to please Him alone and the power to unite herself to Him closely. Now, to be united to God is simply to see God, and this is granted only to the clean of heart, as their special prerogative. A clean heart had the Prophet David, who said to the Lord, "My soul

hath stuck close to Thee," and, "But it is good for me to cleave to God." By seeing he cleaved, and he saw by cleaving. To the soul, then, that is well exercised in the virtues just mentioned, the messengers of heaven manifest themselves familiarly and frequently, particularly if they observe her to be assiduous at prayer. Who will grant me that my "petitions may be made known to the household of God" through your mediation, O benevolent princes! * Not merely to God, for to Him even "the thought of man confesseth," but to the household of God, so as to include also those who dwell with Him, both blessed angels and beatified souls of men. I am "needy"—who will "raise" me "up from the earth"? I am "poor"—who will "lift" me "up out of the dung-hill," that so "I may sit with princes and hold the throne of glory"? Yet I doubt not they will gladly introduce into the palace one whom they condescend to visit even on the "dung-hill." And if they rejoice at our conversion, can they despise us when we have been exalted in glory?

In my opinion, therefore, it is these ministering spirits to whom the Spouse, in her prayer, addresses herself and opens her heart, as being the domestics and friends of the Bridegroom, when she says, "Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth." And notice the familiar and friendly conversation of a soul still imprisoned in the flesh, with these celestial powers. She

* It may be worth while to mention here a vision once vouchsafed to the Servant of God. During the office of Matins he beheld an angel standing beside each religious and recording the merit of his devotion. Some were writing in gold, some in silver, others in ink, and others again in water. This distinction, he was given to understand, symbolised variety in degrees of fervour.—(Translator.)

is eager to be kissed ; she asks what she desires ; yet she does not name Him Whom she loves. The reason is that she feels sure they do not require to be told, since He is the ordinary subject of conversation between herself and them. Hence she does not say, " Let this or that one kiss me," but only " Let *Him* kiss me." So, Mary Magdalen did not mention by name Him Whom she was seeking, but merely said to the Stranger Whom she believed to be the gardener, " Sir, if thou hast taken Him away." Taken whom ? She does not specify, because she thought that what her own heart could not for a moment forget, must be equally present to the thoughts of every one. In the same manner the Spouse, speaking to the companions of the Bridegroom, to whom, as she was aware, her secret was known, suppressed her Beloved's name, and broke out abruptly with the request, " Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth." About this kiss, my brethren, I will say no more to-day. But in to-morrow's discourse you shall hear whatever thereon, in answer to your prayer, the grace of the Holy Spirit, Who teacheth all things, shall further inspire me with. For it is not by flesh and blood that this secret is revealed, but by the Holy Ghost, " Who searcheth the deep things of God," Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and liveth and reigneth with Them for evermore. Amen.

SERMON VIII

On the Kiss of the Mouth interpreted of the Holy Spirit.

'Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth."

To-day, my brethren, in fulfilment of the promise made in my last sermon, I purpose to speak more particularly of the supreme kiss, that is to say, of the kiss of the Mouth.* And as this kiss is sweeter than the other two, viz., those of the Feet and of the Hand, more rarely enjoyed, and more difficult to comprehend, the present discourse demands from you a more than ordinary attention. To begin on a level more lofty than usual, it appears to me that He Who said, "No one knoweth the Son but the Father, neither doth anyone know the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him,"

* Elsewhere the Saint writes: "I'm sure no person of prudence will find fault with me for giving various interpretations of the same text, provided I say nothing contrary to truth. For charity, which every part of Holy Scripture is intended to subserve, will be able to accomplish its work of edification all the more efficaciously in proportion to the number of apt expositions discoverable for each passage. Why should we condemn in scriptural exegesis what we are constantly doing in the use of other things? How many are the purposes for which water, v.g., is employed! In the same way, from any text of Scripture it is possible to extract a variety of true significations, adapted to the necessity or use of different souls."—(Translator.)

by these words designated a kind of kiss which is altogether ineffable and incommunicable to any creature. "For the Father loveth the Son" and embraces Him with an infinite affection, as the Supreme His Co-equal, the Eternal His Co-Eternal, the One His Only-Begotten. But not less for Him is the love of the Son, Who even died for the love of the Father, as He Himself testifies when He says, "That all may know that I love the Father, arise, let us go." He spoke evidently of going to His Passion. Now, what is that mutual love and knowledge between Father and Son but a most sweet and incomprehensible kiss?

I, at any rate, hold it as certain that no creature, not excepting even the angels, is admitted to a comprehension of this secret of love, so great and so holy. St. Paul was of the same mind when he affirmed that this "peace surpasseth all understanding," the angelic understanding included. Hence not even the Spouse, although otherwise daring enough, would yet venture to say, "let Him kiss me with His *Mouth*," for she reserved that to the Father. But she asks for something less in the request, "Let Him kiss me with *the kiss* of His Mouth." Do you wish to behold this new Spouse receiving the new kiss, not from the Mouth, but from "the Kiss of His mouth"? "He breathed on them," says the Evangelist, namely, Jesus on the apostles, that is, on the primitive Church, "and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Assuredly that was a kiss. What? The corporeal exhalation? No, my brethren, but the invisible Spirit. And the reason why He was communicated by the Lord's breathing was this, in order that we should understand that He proceeds from the Son in like manner as from the Father, being truly

a Divine Kiss, common to the Mouth That kisses and the Mouth That is kissed. Consequently, it is enough for the Spouse to be kissed "with the Kiss" of the Bridegroom, without being kissed with His Mouth. For it is no small thing, nor a matter deserving of but slight esteem, to be kissed with that Kiss, namely, to receive an infusion of the Holy Spirit. This should not seem fanciful; because if I am right in regarding the Father as the Mouth That kisses, and the Son as the Mouth That is kissed, I cannot be very far wrong in understanding by the Kiss Itself the Divine Spirit, Who is the imperturbable Peace of the Father and Son, the everlasting Bond, the undivided Love, the indivisible Unity.

It is, therefore, with regard to Him that the Spouse is so venturesome, and she confidently asks, using the image of a kiss, that He would deign to infuse Himself into her heart. If she is so daring, it is because she has heard something which appears to encourage her presumption. For has she not heard the Son saying, "No one knoweth the Son but the Father, neither doth any one know the Father but the Son," and adding, "and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him"? But she has no doubt that the Bridegroom would be pleased to make this revelation to His Bride before all others. Hence she boldly asks a kiss, that is, the Holy Spirit, in Whom are revealed both the Father and the Son. One, indeed, cannot be known without the Other. Hence the Lord said, "He who seeth Me seeth My Father also." And St. John, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; he that confesseth the Son, hath also the Father." From this it is evident that neither the

Father can be known without the Son, nor the Son without the Father. Rightly, then, is supreme felicity made to consist, not in the knowledge of One or Other, but of Both, by Him Who says, "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." Finally, those who follow the Lamb are said to have His name and the name of the Father written on their foreheads, which means that they rejoice in the knowledge of Both.

But some one may here object and say, "Therefore the knowledge of the Holy Ghost is not essential to our happiness, because when Christ declared that eternal life consisted in knowing the Father and the Son, He said nothing of the Third Person." Nothing explicitly, I grant you. But when the Father and the Son are perfectly known, known also must assuredly be the Holy Spirit, Who is the common Goodness of the Two. Even one human being cannot be fully known to another so long as it is uncertain whether his disposition is good or evil. Yet even when the Saviour said, "This is eternal life that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent," if this mission demonstrates the good-will both of the Father, Who so lovingly sent His Son, and of the Son, Who so freely obeyed His Father, even then, I say, He was not silent respecting the Spirit, for He made mention of that infinite Loving-kindness common to Both. And is not the Holy Ghost the Love and the Kindness of Father and Son?

Consequently, the Spouse, in requesting a kiss, prays for the grace of this threefold knowledge, so much, at least, as is possible for her to receive whilst still

in the flesh. And she asks this of the Son to Whom it belongs to reveal the Father " to whomsoever it shall please Him." The Son, therefore, reveals both Himself and His Father to such as He pleases. But the revelation is made by a Kiss, that is, by the Holy Spirit, as the Apostle witnesses, when he says, " But to us God hath revealed Them by His Spirit." Now in giving the Spirit by Whom He reveals the Father and Son, He also reveals the Spirit Himself. He reveals by giving, and by revealing He gives.* Besides, the revelation which is made by the Holy Spirit not only communicates the light of knowledge, but also enkindles the flames of love. Hence the words of St. Paul, " The charity of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Who is given to us." And perhaps this is the reason why, with regard to those, who "knowing God, did not glorify Him as God," we do not read that they got their knowledge by revelation of the Holy Ghost. Because, namely, their knowledge was not accompanied by love. The Apostle simply says, "for God had manifested it unto them," and does not add " by His Spirit." Otherwise, the kiss, which is the privilege of the Spouse, would be usurped by impious souls, who, content with the knowledge that " puffeth up," are unconcerned for the charity that "edifieth." But St. Paul himself shall tell us whence they derived their knowledge of God. They " perceived " Him, he says, " by the things that are made, being understood." Hence it is manifest that they could not have known Him perfectly Whom they loved not at all. For had they possessed such

* " Dando revelat et dat revelando." St. Bernard is very fond of such inverted expressions.—(Translator.)

perfect knowledge, they surely would not have been ignorant of that infinite goodness wherewith He willed to be born in the flesh and to die for their redemption. Hear now what attributes of God were revealed to them: "His eternal power also and Divinity." You see how, in the presumption of a spirit not divine but human, they investigated His attributes of sublimity and majesty, but failed to understand that He was "meek and humble of Heart." This should not surprise us, since Behemoth, their chief, "sees everything high," as is written of him, but nothing that is lowly. David, on the contrary, would not "walk in great matters nor in wonderful things above" him, lest, as a "searcher into majesty," he should "be overwhelmed by glory."

Do you, also, my brethren, if you would pick your steps cautiously amidst such mysteries of truth, ever bear in mind the counsel of the Wise Man, "Seek not the things that are too high for thee, and search not into things above thy ability." In matters of this nature, walk in the Spirit, not by the light of your own intelligence. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit does not excite curiosity, but rather enkindles charity. Justly, therefore, does the Spouse, in seeking Him "Whom her soul loveth," refuse to put her trust in the senses of the flesh, or to be satisfied with the vain reasonings of human curiosity. But she solicits a kiss, that is, she invokes the Holy Spirit from Whom she shall obtain both the food of knowledge and the seasoning of grace. That is true knowledge which is imparted by means of a kiss, and is accepted with love, because a kiss is the token of love, Consequently, the "knowledge" which "puffeth up," which is unaccompanied

by charity, does not proceed from a kiss. But neither can this kiss of love be claimed by those who indeed "have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." For the grace of the kiss communicates at once both the light of knowledge and the warmth of love. It is in truth "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding," Who, like the bee bearing wax and honey, has wherewith to light the lamp of knowledge and to infuse the sweetness of devotion. Wherefore, let not him who has understanding of truth without love, nor him who has love without understanding, ever imagine he has received this kiss. With it error and coldness are alike incompatible. So, for the reception of the twofold grace of this all-holy kiss, let the Spouse on her part get ready her two lips, namely, her intelligence for "understanding," and her will for "wisdom." Thus, glorying in a perfect kiss, she will deserve to hear these words of consolation, "Grace is poured abroad on thy lips, therefore hath God blessed thee for ever." Accordingly, the Father, when kissing His Son, "uttereth" most fully to Him the secrets of His Divinity. This Holy Scripture indicates to us by the words, "Day to Day uttereth speech." But this eternal and divinely-sweet embrace it is given to no creature whatsoever to behold, as I have already remarked, the Holy Spirit, common to Father and Son, being the sole witness and confidant of Their mutual knowledge and love. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath Him his counsellor?"

But perchance some one will say to me: "How then hast thou come to know what thou confessest has been revealed to no creature?" I have an obvious answer. "The Only-Begotten, Who is in the Bosom of the

Father, He hath declared Him," not indeed to me, miserable and unworthy as I am, but to the holy Baptist, the "friend of the Bridegroom," whose words these are. And not only to him, but also to St. John the Evangelist, as being "the disciple whom Jesus loved." For his soul, too, was pleasing to God, truly worthy both of the name and of the dowry of a spouse, worthy of the embrace of the Bridegroom, even worthy of the privilege of reclining on the Bosom of the Lord. St. John derived from the Heart of the Only-Begotten, what He derived from His Father's, but not the Evangelist alone. The same is true of all to whom "the Angel of the Great Counsel" addressed the words, "I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father I have made known to you." From the same Heart was derived the knowledge of St. Paul who received his Gospel "not from man, nor through man, but by revelation from Jesus Christ." Most certainly, all these could say with as much joy as veracity, "The Only-Begotten, Who is in the Bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And what, my brethren, was this "declaration" but a kiss bestowed on them? Yet it was the kiss of the Kiss, not the Kiss of the Mouth. Listen: "I and the Father are One"—there you have the Kiss of the Mouth. Also here, "I am in the Father and the Father in Me." This is the Kiss from Mouth to Mouth. But let no creature presume to claim It. It is a Kiss of love and of peace. But that love "surpasseth all knowledge," as that peace "surpasseth all understanding." Nevertheless, what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man," that God revealed to St. Paul by His Spirit,

that is, by "the Kiss of His Mouth." Therefore, the mutual Indwelling of the Son in the Father and of the Father in the Son is the Kiss of the Mouth. The kiss of the Kiss is that of which we read, "For we have not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit That is of God that we may know the things that are given us from God."

In order to make the distinction clearer, I say that He, Who receives the *plenitude*, receives the Kiss of the Mouth; and he, who receives *of* the plenitude, receives the kiss of the Kiss. A great saint indeed is Paul. Yet however high he can raise his mouth, although he can reach up to the third heaven, he can never attain to the Lips of the Most High. Let him be content with his own measure, and as he cannot mount to that "Face of glory," let him humbly pray that It would stoop to his level and send down a kiss from above. But He, Who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," so that He could say, "I and the Father are One," as He is associated with the Father as an Equal, embraces Him also as an Equal, and, instead of soliciting a kiss from a lower level, at an equal elevation presses Mouth to Mouth, thus, by a singular prerogative, receiving the Kiss of the Mouth Christ's Kiss, consequently, is the plenitude, Paul's but a participation. The Master can boast of having obtained the Kiss of the Mouth; the disciple the kiss of the Kiss.

Yet happy is that kiss of participation whereby we not only know God, but also love the Father, Who, without doubt, is not fully known until He is perfectly loved. My brethren, is there amongst you one who sometimes, in the depths of his heart, hears the Spirit

of the Son "crying Abba, Father"? If such there be, let him feel assured of the love of the Father, for he has the testimony of his own conscience that he is led by the same Spirit as the Son. O soul who art such, whosoever thou be, have courage, have confidence, and fear nothing. In the Spirit of Christ thou canst recognise thyself as the daughter of the Father and as the spouse and sister of the Son. Spouse and sister, both these titles may be found applied in Sacred Scripture to the soul that is such. This I can show without much labour. Thus, the Bridegroom says to His Bride, "I am come into My garden, O My Sister, My Spouse." She is a Sister as having the same Father, a Spouse as having the same Spirit. If carnal matrimony unites two in one flesh, why should not spiritual nuptials have greater efficacy to conjoin two in one Spirit? Moreover, we have the testimony of St. Paul that "He that cleaveth to God is one Spirit." But hear also from the Father how lovingly and how condescendingly He calls the faithful soul His daughter, and yet invites her as the bride of His Son to the embraces of that Son: "Hear, O daughter! and see, and incline thine ear, and forget thy people and thy father's house, and the King shall desire thy beauty." Behold from Whom this spouse demands a kiss. O happy soul! take care and be reverent, because He is the Lord Thy God, perhaps not so much to be kissed as to be adored with the Father and the Holy Ghost for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON IX

On the Breasts of the Bridegroom and of the Spouse.

"Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth, for Thy Breasts are better than wine."

Let us now, my brethren, return to our text and explain the words of the Spouse and what follows. These words, spoken abruptly without the least introduction, hang unsteadily so to speak, and loosely swing in air, for want of a beginning or context. It is, therefore, necessary that something be premised to which they may intelligibly cohere. Let us accordingly suppose that those, whom I have called the friends of the Bridegroom, as yesterday and the day before, so also to-day have come on a visit to salute the Spouse. Finding her discontented, and complaining, and out of humour, they wonder what the cause can be, and address her in this manner: "What has happened? How is it we see thee more sad than usual? Wherefore these unexpected complaints and murmurs? Certainly, after returning at length to thy lawful Husband, and only when compelled to do so by the ill-treatment of the other lovers after whom thou hadst gone so disloyally and unfaithfully, certainly, thou didst importune Him with prayers and tears to allow thee even to kiss His Feet. Is it not so?" "Yes," she answers. "What then? Having obtained thy request, and the pardon of thy infidelities at the same time in the kiss of His Foot, didst thou not again grow discontented? Not

satisfied with so much condescension, but desiring greater familiarity, with the same insistence as before thou didst now implore and obtain the second grace, and with the kiss of the Hand wast adorned with virtues neither few in number nor little in importance. Thou dost admit all this ? " "I do," she replies. "Art not thou the one who used to protest and promise that, if ever she was admitted to the kiss of the Hand, this would be enough for her, and thereafter she would ask for nothing more ? " " The same," she confesses. " What then ? Perhaps thou wilt complain that some of the graces already bestowed have been taken back ? " " No, indeed." " Or, it may be that thou art afraid thou shalt be called upon to answer for the sins of thy past life, which, it was thy hope, had been forgiven ? " " Not even that." " Well then, tell us what is wrong and how we can help thee." " I cannot rest," she exclaims, " until He kisses me with the kiss of His Mouth. I am thankful for being allowed to kiss His Feet. I am grateful for the privilege of kissing His Hand. But if He has any care for me, 'let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth.' I am not, I repeat, ungrateful, but—I love. What I have already obtained is, I acknowledge, too much for my desert, yet altogether too little for my desire. I am governed more by desire than by reason. Do not, I beg of you, blame my presumption, since affection urges me on. Modesty remonstrates, but love is supreme. I am not ignorant that 'the honour of the King loveth judgment.' But headlong love will not wait for judgment, will not suffer the restraints of counsel, will not be held in check by modesty, will not follow the guidance of reason. I beg, I entreat, I implore, 'let Him kiss me

with the kiss of His Mouth.' Lo! these many years, for His sake, I have been careful to lead a chaste and sober life; I have applied myself with diligence to spiritual reading; I have resisted my evil passions; I have watched against temptation; I have been constant in prayer; I have 'recounted my years in the bitterness of my soul!' As far as was possible to me, I have, I think, lived without reproach amongst my brethren. I have been obedient to my superiors, going out and coming in according to the command of authority. So far from coveting my neighbour's goods, I have rather given him my own and myself with them. In the sweat of my brow have I eaten my bread. Yet in all these painful exercises I have felt nothing save the monotonous drudgery of routine, unseasoned with sweetness. What am I but, according to the Prophet, as 'the heifer of Ephraim taught to love to tread out the corn'? In the Gospel, he is reputed a useless servant who only does what he is obliged to do. I am, perhaps, in some way faithfully observing the commandments, yet, even in that observance 'my soul is as earth without water.' In order, therefore, that my whole burnt-offering may be made fat,' 'let Him, I implore, 'kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth.'"

Many of you, as I remember, in the manifestations of conscience which you make to me privately, are wont to complain of this aridity and languor of soul, this heaviness and dulness of mind, whereby you are rendered incapable of penetrating the profound and hidden things of God, and can experience little or none of the sweetness of the Spirit. What is that, my brethren, but a longing to be kissed? Plainly, such persons are sighing and yearning after the Spirit of

wisdom and understanding. They want understanding to direct them to the goal. They want wisdom to relish what understanding * reveals. It was, I think, with such sentiments the Prophet prayed when he said, "Let my soul be filled as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips." That is to say, he wanted a kiss, and such a kiss as would by the contact, suffuse his lips with the oil of special grace, and thus bring about the fulfilment of the wish he gives expression to elsewhere: "Let my mouth be filled with praise, that I may sing Thy glory, Thy greatness all the day long." Then, after tasting, he cries out, "How great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee!" But, perhaps, I have delayed long enough over this kiss, although, candidly, I doubt as to whether I have as yet spoken anything worthy of the subject. However, since, after all, it is better learned when impressed in act than when expressed in words, we may now pass on.

The text continues: "For Thy breasts are better than wine, smelling sweet of the best ointments."

* This distinction between understanding and wisdom, so familiar with mystical writers, has its foundation in etymology, as St. Bernard elsewhere points out, *sapientia* (wisdom) being derived from the verb *sapere* (to relish). To the mystic, accordingly, wisdom is the savour or seasoning of science—knowledge with love. It includes the light of knowledge or understanding to which it adds the heat of devotion. This heat even strengthens the light it accompanies, and hence we shall find St. Bernard, later on, substituting for St. Anselm's *Credo ut intelligam* (I believe that I may understand) the mystical formula *Amo ut intelligam* (I love that I may understand). Thus, to the mind of our Saint, mere understanding or knowledge stands to wisdom in pretty much the same relation as the cold starlight to the warm sunshine.—(Translator.)

Whose words these are, we are not informed. Hence it is left for the commentator to determine the person to whom they most properly belong. As for me, I think I can see reasons for assigning them either to the Spouse, or to the Bridegroom, or to the friends of the Bridegroom. And, in the first place, I will point out how fitly they may be regarded as coming from the Spouse. Whilst she is conversing with the familiars of her Beloved, lo! He of Whom they speak approaches. For He willingly draws nigh to those who are talking about Him. Such has ever been His custom. Thus, to the disciples journeying to Emmaus and conversing about Jesus, He joined Himself as a pleasant and sociable companion. This is what He promises in the Gospel: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them"; and also by His Prophet: "Before they shall call, I will hear, and whilst yet they are speaking I will hear." So now He comes uninvited to the Spouse and her companions, and, delighted with their words, anticipates their prayers. I believe, indeed, that sometimes He does not even wait for words, but is drawn to us by our very thoughts. Hence, he who was found "a man according to the heart" of God, tells us that "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor, Thine Ear hath heard the preparation of their heart." Do you, therefore, my brethren, watch over yourselves in every place, as knowing yourselves to be ever under the Eye of that God Who "searcheth the hearts and the reins," "Who hath made the hearts of everyone of" you, Who "understandeth all your works." The Spouse, accordingly, observing the presence of her Beloved, breaks off abruptly in her speech. She feels

ashamed of her presumption in which, as she perceives, she has been discovered by Him. It had seemed to her that the way to compass her design least at variance with the rules of modesty, would be to engage the services of the friends of the Bridegroom and use them as intermediaries. She presently turns to the Bridegroom Himself, and she tries to excuse her presumption as well as she can, saying, "For Thy breasts are better than wine, smelling sweet of the best ointments." As if she should say, "If I appear to Thee ambitious, the fault lies with Thyself, O my Bridegroom, Who suckled me so condescendingly on the sweetness of Thy Breasts. Thus, all fear being banished rather by Thy love rather than by my temerity, I have been more daring, perhaps, than is expedient. So my imprudence results from mindfulness of Thy love to me and forgetfulness of Thy Majesty." Let these remarks be understood as merely supplying a context for the words of the Canticle. We have now to see what means this strange commendation of the Bridegroom's Breasts.

These two Breasts of the Beloved are simply the two proofs He offers us of the benignity of His Nature, in patiently waiting for the sinner's return to Him, and affectionately receiving the penitent. A twofold sweetness of most delicious savour, I say, exudes from the Breast of the Lord Jesus, namely, long-suffering in expectation and readiness in forgiving. Lest you should consider this but a fancy of my own, I will give you scriptural testimony of it. Concerning long-suffering we read, "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and patience and long-suffering?" Again, "Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance." Hence, if He delays long before pronounc-

ing the sentence of punishment against the sinner, the reason is, because He desires rather to bestow the grace of pardon upon the penitent. "For He willeth not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live." Let me now give you testimonies regarding the second Breast which I have interpreted to mean facility in pardoning. Concerning it we read, "In whatever hour the sinner shall repent, his sin shall be forgiven him." Also, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He is bountiful to forgive." David beautifully comprehends in a few words both these Divine Breasts, where he says that the Lord is "long-suffering and plenteous in mercy." The Spouse, therefore, acknowledges that, by the experience of this twofold mercy, her confidence has increased to such an extent as to embolden her to ask for a kiss. "What wonder, O my Beloved!" we may fancy her saying, "if I make so bold with Thee after being allowed to draw from Thy Breasts such an abundance of sweetness? So it is no reliance on my own merits, but the sweetness of Thy Breasts that makes me so daring." Hence, the meaning of the expression, "Thy Breasts are better than wine," may be understood to be this: "The oil of divine grace that flows from Thy Breasts is more useful to me for my spiritual progress than are the reproofs, wine-like in their pungency, of my human superiors. And not alone are 'Thy Breasts better than wine,' but they also 'smell sweet of the best ointments.' That is to say, not only dost Thou nourish those who are present with the milk of spiritual sweetness, but Thou dost also shed around them that are absent the sweet odour of a

worthy esteem of Thyself, thus 'having good testimony both from those who are without and from those who are within.' Thou hast, I say, milk within and ointments without, because unless Thou didst first attract us by the odour of Thy ointments, there would be none to refresh with the sweetness of Thy milk." As to these ointments, and whether they suggest aught that is deserving of consideration, we shall see afterwards when we come to the verse, "We will run after Thee to the odour of Thy ointments." Now, according to my promise, let us examine if the same words, which I have just explained as spoken by the Spouse, may not also be ascribed to the Bridegroom.

As she is speaking of her Beloved, suddenly, as I have said, He Himself appears. He complies with her request, and bestows the kiss, thus fulfilling in her regard the word which is written, "Thou hast given" her her "heart's desire, and hast not withholden from" her "the will of her lips." The filling of her breasts bears witness to this. So great, my brethren, is the efficacy of this holy kiss, that, directly it is received, it causes the breasts to swell out with an abundance of spiritual milk. Those amongst you who are most given to prayer understand what I am saying from their own experience. How often do we not draw near to the altar with dry and tepid hearts! But whilst we persevere in prayer, suddenly there is an infusion of grace, our hearts swell, our whole interior is deluged with an inundation of piety, and, were there but someone to press, the milk of sweetness engendered would be neither slow nor scanty in coming. Thus, then, the Bridegroom may say to the espoused soul, "Now, My Spouse, thou hast received what thou didst ask for, and

the proof of it is this, that thy breasts are become better than wine. From the fulness of thy breasts thou mayst infer that the kiss solicited has been bestowed upon thee. Behold, they are now distended and, in the abundance of milk, made better than the wine of worldly knowledge, which inebriates indeed, but with curiosity, not with charity, filling rather than nourishing, inflating rather than edifying, producing satiety rather than strength."

Let us next consider the same words as if spoken by the friends of the Bridegroom. "Unreasonably," they protest, "dost thou, O Spouse, complain of thy Beloved, because what He has already granted thee is of more value than that which thou now requirest. The object of thy present desire will no doubt give thee pleasure. Yet the breasts, from which thou feedest the children of thy womb, are better, that is, are more necessary, than the wine of contemplation for which thou prayest. The latter is the wine that 'rejoiceth the heart of (the individual) man,' but the former is the charity that edifies the multitude. If Rachel, that is, the exercises of the contemplative life, be the more fair, Lia, to wit, the active ministry, is the more fruitful. Do not, then, devote too much time to the kisses of contemplation, for better are the breasts of preaching."*

* The Saint is here manifestly comparing the active life with the contemplative merely from the point of view of our neighbour's necessity. But in many places elsewhere he considers the two states according to their intrinsic dignity and perfection, and gives a decided preference to the life of contemplation, as being the closest approximation to the life of heaven. Thus, in his treatise *De Modo Vivendi*, he says: "The active life is good indeed, but far better is the contemplative." And in his third sermon on the Assumption, he calls the contem-

There is, besides, another possible interpretation, which indeed I had not intended to propose to you, but which, as it seems to me now, ought not to be passed over. For why should we not suppose that these words of the Canticle belong most properly to the "little ones," of whom the Spouse, as mother or nurse, has solicitous charge? Such "little ones," that is to say, immatureand tender souls, cannot endure with patience that she should give herself to repose, by whose doctrine and example they desire to be more fully instructed and edified. And in a subsequent verse we read of their being severely checked in their troublesome restiveness and forbidden to awaken the Spouse until she herself wishes. These children, therefore, when they notice her eager for kisses, seeking seclusion, avoiding

plative life the "better part" (*optimam partem*). It is worth noting that the reason he assigns for his preference, viz., that, whereas the service of our neighbour is destined to end with time, divine contemplation, just as charity, shall continue for eternity, avails equally to prove the superiority of the purely contemplative life over the mixed. Yet recogni ing that uninterrupted attention to God is impossible to us in our present condition, so that even the "eagles" must sometimes descend from the skies, he holds that our highest estate is the mixed, which he compares to Jacob's Ladder whereon we ascend to God by contemplation and descend to the exercises of the active life. For, after all, he says, Mary and Martha, that is, the contemplative and the active life, are sisters, and like good sisters should dwell together. But to show us that the soul's attraction should be more and more towards contemplation, he adds the remark that it is well with the household where Martha is ever complaining of Mary, but things are not as they ought to be, when Mary has reason to complain of Martha, that is to say, when one allows his exterior occupations to encroach upon his spiritual exercises. From what has been said of the mixed and contemplative lives and their relative perfections, it will be seen that, however widely St. Bernard and St. Thomas may differ with regard to the speculative question of superiority, practically they are in accord —(Translator.)

publicity, keeping aloof from the multitude, and preferring her own ease to the care of themselves, raise their voices in protest against such conduct. "Act not so," they cry, "act not so. Better is the milk of thy breasts than the wine of such kisses. By means of that milk thou canst deliver us from 'the carnal desires that war against the soul,' thou canst rescue us from the world and win us to God." Or perhaps, when they say, "Because thy breasts are better than wine," they intend to signify this: "Those spiritual delights distilled to us from thy breasts are far superior to the earthly pleasures wherewith, as with wine, we were formerly intoxicated and held captive."

This comparison of bodily pleasures with wine is very apt. Just as the grape, when drained by pressure has no longer any juice to yield, so the body in the wine-press of death is sterilised completely as a source of delight, and can never again wax wanton under the impulse of passion. Hence, the Prophet declares, "All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field. The grass is withered and the flower is fallen." And the Apostle, "He that soweth in the flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption." Also, "Meat for the stomach and the stomach for the meat, but God shall destroy both it and them." But consider, if perhaps this comparison may be extended not only to the flesh, but to the world as well. It also "passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof," and all things therein shall come to an end of which there is no end. But not so the spiritual breasts. These, when exhausted, shall be again replenished, from the fountain in the maternal heart, with the milk that can satisfy the sucklings'

thirst. Better, therefore, than the love of the flesh and the world are those breasts of the Spouse rightly said to be, which no number of little ones can ever drain, but which are always refilled to overflowing from the heart of charity. For rivers flow forth ceaselessly from that heart, and there is made within it a "fountain of living water springing up into eternal life." The crowning commendation of the Spouses' breasts is that which is said of the fragrance of their ointments. By this we are given to understand that they not only feed us with the sweetness of sound doctrine, but also exhale the pleasant odour of a good name. As to what these breasts are, what the milk that fills them, and what the ointments whereof they are redolent, all these questions I purpose to discuss more in detail in another sermon, with the help of Christ, Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON X

On the Spiritual Ointments.

"Smelling sweet of the best ointments."

My brethren, I cannot pretend to such profundity of understanding or to such perspicacity of genius as would enable me to discover anything new for myself. But in the mouth of St. Paul, which is always open to us, I find a full and ever-flowing fountain. As very often on other occasions, so now also in explaining the breasts of the Spouse, I shall draw on its resources. "Rejoice with those who rejoice," says the great Apostle, "weep with those who weep." In these few words he expresses all the affections of a mother's heart. For little children know not how to be ill or well without their sickness or health being, through sympathy, shared in by her who brought them into the world. She cannot help being conformed in all things to her own flesh and blood. Wherefore, agreeably to the mind of St. Paul, I will take the two breasts of the Spouse to signify these two maternal affections, naming one Compassion and the other Congratulation or Sympathy with joy. For if the Spouse does not as yet possess such feelings, does not as yet exhibit these breasts, is not as yet conscious of a readiness to "rejoice with those that rejoice" and to "weep with those that weep," she is still but "a little one" and immature. Should a soul so defective be appointed to the government of others, or to the office of preaching, she will do no good to her neighbour, but infinite evil

to herself. But how recklessly bold and lost to shame should one of this kind be to thrust herself uncalled into such functions!

But let us return to the breasts of the Spouse, and to each let us assign its own peculiar kind of milk. I say, then, that Congratulation yields the milk of enccuragement, Compassion that of consolation. Both species the spiritual mother feels flowing abundantly into her loving heart from the heavenly source whenever she obtains the kiss of divine contemplation. You may see her immediately afterwards with full breasts giving suck to her children, distilling from the one breast a wealth of consolation, and from the other a plenteous stream of salutary exhortation, according as the various needs of the little ones may appear to demand. For example, should she notice that one of those whom she has begotten in Christ, is agitated by some violent temptation, and reduced thereby to such a state of perturbation, sadness, and pusillanimity as to be no longer capable of withstanding the enemy's onslaught, how she sympathises with him! how she soothes him! how she weeps over him! how she consoles him! how many arguments of piety does she not presently discover with which to lift him up out of his depression! But if, on the contrary, she observes him to be full of zeal and alacrity, and making good progress towards perfection, oh, then she is jubilant! she approaches him with salutary admonitions; she fans his zeal to brighter flame; she provides him as well as she can with the means of perseverance; she exhorts him to be ever striving towards higher sanctity. In this way does she accommodate herself to all. She transfers to herself the dispositions of all.

And she shows herself to be the mother of the weak no less than of the fervent.

How many do we behold to-day actuated by feelings and dispositions very far from motherly!—I speak of those who have undertaken the government of souls. Rather it must be confessed, although with groans of misery, that they melt down in the furnace of their avarice, and fashion into things of traffic, and barter away for filthy lucre the reproaches of Christ, the spittings, the scourges, the nails, the lance, His cross, and His death,—all. And the price of this all, the world's ransom, they hasten to place in their purses! The only difference between prelates* of this character and the Iscariot is that, whereas he equated the value of all this merchandise with thirty (silver) pieces, they, on the contrary, influenced by a more griping greed of gain, endeavour to drive a better bargain by demanding an immeasurably higher price. After these profits they hunger with an insatiable appetite. When possessed, they are in fear lest they lose them, and they grieve for them when lost. In the love of them they rest, in so far, at least, as their anxiety to preserve and increase them is consistent with any rest. But for the loss or the salvation of souls, they have no concern. Most certainly, these are not true mothers, who, though they are "grown fat and thick and gross" out

* The Saint is speaking of simoniac prelates, at that time very numerous in the Church, who knocked down ecclesiastical offices and privileges to the highest bidder, thus making merchandise of the fruits of Christ's Passion. The comparison with Judas recalls a similar made somewhere by Ruskin. "There are many Iscariots nowadays," says the great art critic, "but, alas! very few of them get the grace of hanging themselves."—(Translator.)

of the patrimony of the Crucified, yet feel no compassion for "the affliction of Joseph." The real mother makes herself known by her conduct. She has breasts and she keeps them full. She knows well how to "rejoice with those that rejoice and to weep with those that weep." Nor does she cease to extract the milk of exhortation from the breast of Congratulation, or the milk of consolation from the breast of Compassion. Concerning this milk and these breasts of the Spouse, I have now said enough.

I shall next endeavour to explain what these ointments are of which the breasts smell so sweetly, but only on condition that you, my brethren, by your prayers, shall obtain for me the double grace of conceiving worthy sentiments and of clothing them in suitable language, for the benefit of my hearers, that is, of yourselves. Of these ointments, some belong to the Bridegroom, others to the Bride, just as there are breasts also proper to each. I indicated, in the preceding discourse, the place where an exposition of the Bridegroom's ointments will be most properly given. Let us here consider those of the Bride, and that the more attentively on account of the high eulogium which Holy Scripture passes upon them, declaring them to be, not merely good, but the very best. And, first of all, I will set forth the various species of ointments, that out of all we may select those which most especially belong to the breasts of the Spouse. There is, then, the ointment of Contrition, there is the ointment of Devotion, and the ointment of Piety. The first is pungent, causing pain. The second is soothing, and tempers pain. The third is remedial, and banishes pain. I now proceed to discuss these separately.

There is, therefore, an ointment which the soul,

burthened with sins, makes up for herself. This she does when, beginning to consider her ways, she collects, heaps up, and crushes in the mortar of conscience the many and various species of her sins; and in the crucible of a fervid heart, melts down and fuses all together, repentance and sorrow supplying the necessary heat. Hence she can now say with the Psalmist, "My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out." Behold, this is the first ointment wherewith the sinful soul ought to anoint the beginnings of her conversion and soothe her bleeding wounds. For the first "sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit." Hence as long as the poor and needy soul finds not wherewith to compound for herself a better and more precious ointment, let her not neglect to prepare this, even though it be from the vilest materials, because "a contrite and humble heart God will not despise." Besides, the more contemptible she appears in her own eyes, from the consideration of her past sins, the less so does she appear in the Eyes of God. And, after all, if that visible ointment, with which, as we read in the Gospel, the Lord's corporeal Feet were anointed by Magdalen, was but a figure of the invisible and spiritual kind of which there is question here, we certainly cannot consider this vile. For what is it we read of the former? "The house," writes the Evangelist, "was filled with the perfume of the ointment." It was poured by the hand of a sinner, and poured on the lowest members of the sacred Body, that is, on the Feet. Yet it was not so mean and contemptible but that it could fill the whole house with the scent of its spices and the sweetness of its perfumes. My brethren, if we could but realise what a fragrance of delight is exhaled throughout the Church

by the conversion of a single sinner, and what an odour of life unto life the public and perfect penitent becomes, of him also we should proclaim with equal confidence that "the house was filled with the perfume of the ointment." Nay, the perfume of penitence reaches even to the supernal mansions of the blessed above, so that as Truth Itself testifies, "There shall be joy amongst the angels of God over one sinner doing penance." Rejoice, therefore, ye penitents! Be comforted, ye that are fearful! I refer to you, who, recently converted from a worldly life and withdrawn from the ways of sin, have experienced the bitterness and confusion of a contrite heart, with an exceeding pain and torment, as it were of recent wounds. Let your hands distil with confidence the bitterness of myrrh in this saving unction, because "a contrite and humble heart God will not despise." Certainly, we are not to despise or to consider as vile such an anointing, the odour of which is a source of edification to men, and of joy to the angels.

But there is another ointment more precious than this in proportion as it is made from more excellent materials. We have not far to seek for the elements out of which we extract the ointment of Contrition. They are always within reach and found without difficulty. In the little gardens of our own consciences we can easily gather as much and as often as our necessities require. For, if we wish to be sincere, which of us has not always of his own enough of sins and iniquities ready to hand? And, as you know, these are the stuffs whence we obtain the first ointment, described above. But this earth of ours can never produce the spices that yield the second. "From afar and from the uttermost coasts" must we seek them,

"for every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, descending from the Father of lights." This ointment, in fact, is extracted from the divine benefits bestowed on the human race. Happy the man who gathers them carefully, and, with worthy thanks, tries to keep them constantly before the eyes of his soul! When these sweet spices have been placed in the mortar of the breast, and crushed and pounded under the pestle of frequent meditation, and all fused together by the heat of holy desires, and finally mingled with the "oil of gladness," the result shall be, without any doubt, an ointment far more precious and excellent than the first. In proof of this, I need only quote the testimony of Him Who said, "The sacrifice of praise shall glorify Me." Now, this sacrifice will assuredly be offered by him who keeps in mind the benefits of God.

Moreover, since Holy Scripture merely affirms of the first ointment that it is not despised, whereas the second is said to give glory, the latter is manifestly the more highly commended. Again, this is applied to the Head, whilst the other is poured upon the Feet. Now, as in Christ the Head must be referred to the Divinity, according to the words of St. Paul, "The Head of Christ is God," doubtless he, who gives thanks, anoints the Head, seeing that thanks are offered not to man but to God. Not that He, Who is God, has not become Man, since "God and Man are one Christ," but because all good gifts, even such as are communicated through man, have their ultimate source, not in man, but in God. As we know, "it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." Therefore is it written "cursed be the man that trusteth in man." For although it is true that we place our whole hope in the Man-God,

nevertheless we do so not because He is Man, but because He is God. Therefore, the ointment of Contrition is poured on the Feet, since the lowliness of a contrite heart accords well with the humility of Christ's Human Nature; and that of Devotion is given to the Head, because honour belongs to Majesty. Behold, my brethren, what manner of ointment is this second I have proposed to you, with which, namely, that royal Head, Which makes the principalities tremble, does not disdain to be anointed,—nay even deems Itself honoured by the unction, according to the words, "The sacrifice of praise shall glorify Me."

Wherefore, it is not in the power of a poor and needy, that is, of a pusillanimous soul, to confect for herself this spiritual ointment. The spices or elements from which it is produced are only possessed by confidence, which is itself the offspring of liberty of spirit and purity of heart. For he that is diffident and weak in faith is restricted by the scantiness of his resources, and by reason of this poverty cannot spare time to devote himself to the praises of God, or to the consideration of the divine benefits which evokes these praises. And if ever such a one has the courage to endeavour to raise himself to this sublimity, domestic necessities and clamorous cares drag him down again directly, and he has perforce to confine himself once more within the narrow limits of his straitened circumstances. If you ask me the cause of such misery, I shall answer by pointing to what, if I do not mistake, you will recognise as existing, or, at least, as having existed in your own selves. This feebleness and diffidence of soul usually springs, as it seems to me, from one or other of two causes, namely, from newness of conversion, or,

in the case of those who have been long in religion, from tepidity of life. Both the beginner and the lukewarm monk feel their souls oppressed, dejected, and disquieted, the former because of the sudden change of life involved in conversion, the latter because he perceives his old passions revived by his laxity, and the consequent necessity of devoting his energies again to the task of rooting out the briers and nettles that have sprung up anew in his interior garden, a work which will require his continual presence at home. For surely he who staggers under the burden of such penitential labours cannot at the same time delight himself in the praises of God. How can the mouth that is filled with groans and lamentations give forth with Isaias "thanksgiving and the voice of praise"? We are told by the Wise Man that "Music in mourning is as a tale out of time." Besides, thanksgiving does not anticipate, but follows upon the bestowal of favours. Now, the soul that is in sadness, far from rejoicing in divine favours, is rather sorely in need of them. She has, therefore, more incentives to prayer than motives for thanksgiving. One cannot surely recall a benefit which one has not yet received. Rightly, then, have I said that the indigent soul is unable to produce for herself the second species of ointment, which can be extracted only from the recollection of heavenly favours. She cannot see the light so long as she contemplates the shadows. Plunged in bitterness, she occupies herself with melancholy memories of her sins, to the exclusion of every brighter thought. It is to such souls the Prophet addresses the words, "It is vain for you to rise before the light." As if he should say, "vainly do you attempt to rise to the contemplation of

those benefits which excite feelings of pleasure, before the remorse which disquiets you has been soothed by the light of consolation." The ointment of Devotion, therefore, is beyond the reach of the spiritually indigent.

But consider who they are that can sincerely lay claim to an abundance of it. The two apostles "went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." Assuredly, they had anointed themselves well with the oil of the Spirit, whose sweetness * could be soured neither by words nor stripes. For they were rich in charity, which no expenditure can exhaust, and from it they were always able to offer "holocausts full of marrow." Their brimming hearts were constantly distilling this sacred unguent, with which they were then more abundantly supplied, when "they began to speak in divers tongues the wonderful works of God, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak." Those also, no doubt, were richly provided with the same precious liquor, to whom the Apostle bears witness where he says, "I give thanks to my God always for you, for the grace of God that is given you in Christ Jesus, that in all things you are made rich in Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge, as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace." My brethren, would to God that I may be able to return similar thanks for you, as beholding you rich in virtue, full of fervour in the divine praises, and more plenteously abounding in all spiritual graces, through Christ Jesus, Our Lord. Amen.

* *Lenitas*—smoothness. There seems to be an allusion here to the wrestlers' custom of lubricating their bodies so as to render their limbs more supple and flexible.—(Translator.)

SERMON XI

On the Mode and the Fruit of Redemption.

"Smelling sweet of the best ointments."

I want to repeat, to-day, my brethren, what I said at the end of my last discourse, namely, that I wish to see you all participating in that heavenly unction, whereby fervent devotion recalls with joy and gratitude the benefits bestowed by God. A very desirable grace is this, and for two reasons. Firstly, it lightens the labours of this present life, which become more supportable for us whilst our souls are exulting in the praises of God. And, secondly, because there is nothing on earth which so nearly approximates to the life of the blessed in heaven as a fervent choir singing to the glory of the Lord. So Holy Scripture says, "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord, for ever, and ever they shall praise Thee." It is, as I think, to this same ointment of Devotion in particular that the Psalmist refers when he sings, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! like the precious ointment on the head." Such a commendation cannot, it seems to me, be applied to the ointment of Contrition. That, although it is indeed "good," can hardly be described as "pleasant," because the remembrance of past sin begets rather pain than pleasure. Besides, they who are engaged in producing that unguent do not "dwell together." Each for himself mourns and laments over his own transgressions. But when returning thanks, we direct all

our thoughts and attention to God alone, and for this reason we may be truly said to "dwell together." Thanksgiving is "good," as rendering to God the glory that is most justly due to Him. And it is also "pleasant," inasmuch as it is a source of delight.

Wherefore, my brethren, I exhort you to withdraw your minds occasionally from the sad and disquieting memory of your sins, and to pass out of the confined limits of your consciences into the smoother ways of thoughts upon the benefits of God. Thus, after experiencing confusion within yourselves, you will feel your courage revive at the view of the divine goodness. I wish you would resolve to put to the test of experience that which the Prophet recommends to us in the words, "Delight in the Lord and He will give thee the requests of thy heart." True, sorrow for sin is a necessity, yet it should not be continuous. It must sometimes give place to the more cheering thoughts of the divine clemency, lest otherwise the heart, frozen hard by excessive sadness, should fall a victim to despair. Let us, then, mingle a little honey with our wormwood, in order that we may be able to swallow the bitters thus tempered with sweets, and so derive advantage to our spiritual health. Listen to God Himself, how He moderates the bitterness of a contrite heart, how He recalls the pusillanimous from the abyss of despair, how with the honey of sweet and faithful promises He consoles the afflicted and raises up the dejected. By the mouth of His Prophet He says, "For My praise I will bridle thee, lest thou shouldst perish." That is to say, "lest at the view of thy sins, thou shouldst yield to excessive sadness, and, like a runaway horse, plunge headlong over the precipice to thy destruction,

I will bridle thee, I will hold thee back to receive My pardon, I will lift thee up to sing My praises, and thou that art confounded at the memory of thy sins, shalt have thy courage reanimated by the experience of My bounty, discovering My mercy to be greater than thine own guiltiness." Had Cain been held in check with this bridle, never would he have cried out in despair, "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon." God forbid! my brethren, God forbid! The divine loving-kindness is greater than any iniquity whatever. Therefore "the just is his own accuser in the beginning of his words," * but only in the *beginning*, not throughout. Rather it is his custom to conclude his words with the praises of God. Take an example of a just man proceeding in this way. "I have thought on my ways," sings David, "and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." For in his own ways he had endured pain and misery, but had found delight in the way of God's testimonies, "as in all riches." And do you, therefore, my brethren, after the example of the just man, "think of the Lord in goodness," whilst you think of yourselves in humility. So we read in Wisdom, "Think of the Lord in goodness, and seek Him in simplicity of heart." This lesson must be impressed upon your minds by a frequent, or rather by an uninterrupted remembrance of the divine bounty. Otherwise how can that of the Apostle be fulfilled in you, "In all things giving thanks," if you allow the benefits, for which thanks should be rendered, to escape from

* These words are not found in the Vulgate. In Proverbs xviii. 17, we read, "The just is first accuser of himself." But St. Bernard's reading concurs also with others of the Fathers, and exactly translates the Greek. Hence we may suppose that it is taken from an earlier version.—(Translator.)

your memory? I should not like to see you deserving the reproach formerly addressed to the Jews, of whom the Scripture testifies that they were unmindful of God's benefits and of the wonders He had worked in their behalf.

But it is impossible, I will admit, for any man to recall and keep in mind all the benefits which our "compassionate and merciful Lord" ceases not to bestow upon mortals. "Who shall declare the powers of the Lord? Who shall set forth all His praises?" Yet, at least, that which is the chief and greatest, I mean the benefit of Redemption, ought surely never to depart from the memory of the redeemed. In this there are two things which I now wish to recommend, in a special way, to your consideration. I shall be as brief as possible, remembering what is said in Proverbs, "Give an occasion to a wise man, and wisdom shall be added to him." The two things of which I speak are the mode of our Redemption, and its fruit. The mode is God's emptying of Himself. The fruit is His filling of us from Himself. "Meditate on these things." The latter is the seed of holy hope; the former an incentive to the most ardent love. But both are necessary to our progress, lest our hope, unaccompanied by love, should become mercenary, or our love grow lukewarm if considered productive of no fruit.

Furthermore, the fruit which we expect from our love is that which has been promised by Him Who is the Object of our love, "good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall they give into your bosom." That measure, as I am told, will be without measure. But my desire is to know what that *thing* is which is to be measured to

us according to the measure, or rather according to the immensity promised us. "The eye hath not seen, O God! besides Thee what things Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee." Do Thou, Who hast made the preparation, vouchsafe Thyself to tell us what Thou hast prepared. It is our belief, it is our confident hope that, as Thou hast promised, so shall it be, and that "we shall be filled with the good things of Thy house." But what are these "good things" and of what kind? Perhaps "corn and oil and wine"? Gold, and silver and precious stones? But we can "conceive" what these are, and our eyes have "seen" them. We see them and feel only disdain and disgust for prizes so poor. What I seek is that which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." That is pleasant, that is sweet, that is delightful to inquire about, whatever it may be. "They shall be all taught of God," says St. John, "and God shall be all in all." I am informed, then, that the plenitude which we expect from God, is nothing less than a plenitude of God.

But, my brethren, who can comprehend "how great is the multitude of sweetness" which is hidden in this short word, "and God shall be all in all"! Not to speak of the body, I discern in the soul three faculties, to wit, reason, will, and memory. And these, I say, are not so much powers of the soul, as the soul herself.*

* This expression does not necessitate our admitting that the Mellifluous Doctor belonged to the school of philosophers (including Scotus and Ockham amongst medieval authors, and amongst modern scholastics Gutberlet, Jungmann and apparently Maher, cf. his *Psychology*, p. 36) who teach that the faculties of the soul are *really* identical with the soul. For there is a sense in which, consistently with a real distinction between them, the faculties can be said to be the soul.—(Translator.)

How much is wanting to the integrity and perfection of each of the three in this present life is well known to every man that walks according to the spirit. Why should this be so, unless because of the fact that God is not yet "all in all"? Hence it is that the reason is so very often deceived in its judgments, that the will is agitated by a fourfold perturbation,* that the memory is overclouded by a manifold oblivion. To these three kinds of "vanity" the noble "creature is made subject, not willingly, but in hope." For He "Who satisfieth" the soul's "desire with good things," will Himself become to the reason a Plenitude of Light, to the will an Immensity of Peace, and to the memory an ever abiding Eternity. O Truth! O Love! O Eternity! O Blessed and Beatifying Trinity! After Thee this miserable trinity of mine (viz., the soul herself, as endowed with her three faculties) miserably yearns, because it can

* What these perturbations are the holy Preacher does not pause to explain, because he takes it for granted that his hearers will understand. In the same way he refers to, without naming them, in his book *On the Love of God*, ch. viii. But in his second sermon for Lent, and in the fiftieth "De Diversis," he treats the subject explicitly. In the latter place, commenting on the text, "Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem wherewith His mother hath crowned Him," he writes: "He alone, viz., Christ, has been crowned by His mother, for He alone came forth from His mother's womb with His passions in order, as a Bridegroom coming forth from the bridal-chamber. These passions, as is well known, are four, namely, love, joy, fear, and sadness." This is, in fact, the traditional classification of the passions, said to have originated with Zeno of Cittium (350-258 B.C.), founder of the Stoic philosophical school, who taught his disciples that the only road to peace and happiness was by the eradication of these four emotions (*πάθη*). Cicero discusses them in the Tusculan Disputations; St. Augustine (*De Civ. Dei*, xiv. 9) shows, like St. Bernard, that not only are they not evil in themselves, but they can even be made most important auxiliaries of virtue.—(Translator.)

nowhere find content so long as it remains an exile from Thee. By departing from Thee in what errors has it not involved itself! in what sorrows! in what terrors! Woe, woe is me! For what kind of trinity have I exchanged Thee, O Blessed and Divine Trinity! "My heart is troubled," and hence my sorrows. "My strength hath left me," and hence my terrors. "And the light of my eyes itself is not with me," and hence my errors. Behold, O trinity of my soul, how different a trinity from the Divine thou hast fallen upon in thy exile!

Yet, "why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him," that is, when errors shall have been banished from my reason, sorrows from my will, and terrors from my memory, and when, according to my hope, there shall succeed to them admirable tranquillity, perfect sweetness, and eternal security. The first of these I shall find in God as He is Truth, the second in God as He is Love, the third in God as He is Almighty Power. Thus shall God be all in all, communicating Himself to my reason as everlasting Light, to my will as imperturbable Peace, and to my memory as an unfailing, eternally flowing Fountain of Truth. I leave it to you, my brethren, to decide whether I should be right if I attributed the first grace to the Son, the second to the Holy Spirit, and the last to the Father. Yet this must not be understood in such a way as really to exclude either the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Ghost from any one of the three communications. For we should be on our guard lest we admit in the Three Divine Persons any such distinction as would detract from the plenitude of perfection

common to All, or, on the other hand, any such plenitude of perfection as would be incompatible with the Personal Distinctions. At the same time, take notice that in the same way as the just derive tranquillity, sweetness, and security from the Divine Trinity, the earthly-minded experience a corresponding threefold influence from the trinity of evil, viz., the allurements of the flesh, the empty pageants of the world, and the pomps of the devil; and it is by this noxious influence alone that the present life succeeds in deluding its wretched lovers. Hence, St. John tells us "all that is in the world is concupiscence of the flesh, and concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life." So much for the fruit of Redemption.

In the mode of Redemption, which, if you remember, I described as an emptying of Himself on the part of God, there are also three things to which I would particularly invite your attention. For that emptying was not imperfect or partial. "He emptied Himself" even to the extent of taking flesh, of enduring death, even the death of the cross. Who can conceive the humility, the loving-kindness, the condescension manifested by the Lord of Majesty in assuming our nature, in bearing the pains of death, in submitting to the shame of crucifixion? But it may be asked, "Could not the Creator have repaired the work of His hands without all this trouble?" Most certainly He could. Yet He preferred to do so at such cost to Himself in order to take from man every shadow of excuse for that most detestable and hateful vice of ingratitude. If, then, He endured so much hardship it was with the view to make man His debtor for so much love, and that at least the difficulty of Redemption might remind

us of the obligation of thanksgiving, in whom creation, because of its easiness, had failed to awaken any feeling of devotion or gratitude. For how does this ungrateful human creature look upon the benefit of Creation? "I have been created, indeed," he says, "without merit of my own, yet also without inconvenience or trouble on the part of my Maker. He simply spoke and I was made, in common with everything else. What great thing is it whatever thou bestowest, when the gift costs thyself nothing more than a word?" Thus, the impiety of man, depreciating the benefit of Creation, found an occasion for ingratitude there precisely where it should have discovered only motives for love, and that "to make excuses for sins." But now "the mouth is stopped of them that speak wicked things." Now, O man, it is as clear as daylight what sacrifice of Himself the Creator made for thee. From Lord He became a servant; from rich He became poor; from the Word Divine He was made flesh; and from the Son of God He did not disdain to become the Son of man. Remember, then, that, if created from nothing, thou hast not been redeemed for nothing. In six days God created all things, thyself included. But for the space of thirty-three whole years "He wrought salvation in the midst of the earth." Oh, what labours He endured! Did He not, by the ignominy of His cross, add bitterness for Himself to the necessities of the flesh and the temptations of the enemy, and crown them all with the horror of His death? And indeed it was needful for us that He should do so.* Thus, O Lord! thus "men and beasts

* This seems to unsay what has been said above. But there is no real contradiction. In the preceding page the Saint, in opposition to the two other great lights of his time, St. Anselm

Thou hast saved. Oh, how Thou hast multiplied Thy mercy, O God!"

"Meditate on these things," my brethren; live in them. With their perfume refresh your hearts, long dried up within you by the pungent odours of your sins. So shall you abound in those unguents which are both sweet and salutary. Nevertheless, do not imagine you possess, as yet, the "best ointments," so highly commended in the breasts of the Spouse. But my limits will not permit that I should speak of these now. What I have said about the other two, keep fresh in your memory and prove its truth by the test of experience. And with respect to the third and most excellent ointment, assist me by your prayers that my discourse thereon may be worthy, both in matter and manner, of that delightful supplement to the attractions of the Bride, and may animate your souls to the love of the Bridegroom, Who is Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

and Richard of St. Victor, denies that the Passion and Death of Christ was the only means at God's disposal for saving the human race; here, in opposition to Abelard, he maintains the congruity or moral necessity of that manner of redemption. The whole subject is discussed with masterly skill in his 190th Epistle, addressed to Innocent II.—(Translator.)

SERMON XII

On the Ointment of Piety.

"Smelling sweet of the best ointments."

I have already explained to you, my brethren, two of the precious ointments which perfume the breasts of the Spouse, that of Contrition, which "covereth a multitude of sins," and that of Devotion, which embraces a multitude of benefits. Both are salutary, although not both sweet. The first exhales a pungent odour, because the bitter remembrance of sin excites to compunction and sorrow. The second is more soothing, since the contemplation of the divine goodness is a source of consolation and moderates grief. But there remains a third ointment, which far excels both of these. I have called this the unguent of Piety, because it is extracted from the necessities of the poor, the anxieties of the oppressed, the sorrows of the sad, the sins of the guilty, in a word, from all the miseries of all the miserable, even of those who are our enemies. These elements appear to be contemptible. Yet the ointment produced from them surpasses in value all aromatic spices. It is a healing ointment, since "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." Therefore, the materials, from which are produced those "best ointments," worthy of the breasts of the Spouse, and sweet to the smell of her Beloved, are nothing else than many miseries collected together, and contemplated with the eye of piety. Happy the soul that is

careful to enrich and strengthen herself with a goodly store of such aromatic elements, moistening them with the oil of mercy and compounding them into an ointment by means of the fire of charity! Who, think you, is the "acceptable man, that sheweth mercy and lendeth," that is easily moved to compassion, prompt to succour, "judging it more blessed to give than to receive," that is quick to forgive and slow to anger, never harbouring resentment, and in everything looking as much to his neighbour's necessities as to his own? O whosoever thou art that art such, so saturated with the dew of mercy, so abounding in the bowels of piety, so making thyself all things to all, so become to thyself as "a broken vessel" in order to be ready always and everywhere to run to the help and relief of others, in short, so dead to thyself that thou mayst live to all beside—thou assuredly art the happy possessor of this third and most precious ointment! Thy hands have distilled this liquor containing all manner of sweetness! It shall not be dried up in the evil time; neither shall the heat of persecution exhaust it. But God shall be always "mindful of all thy sacrifices and thy whole burnt-offering" shall "be made fat."

There are men of spiritual wealth in the city of the Lord of virtues. I wish to know if any amongst them are possessed of this ointment. And here, as everywhere else, the first name that occurs to me is the name of St. Paul, the "Vessel of election," truly a vessel of fragrant spices, a vessel of perfumes, a vessel filled with odoriferous substances of all kinds. He was, indeed, "the good odour of Christ unto God,' in every place. Far and wide did that great heart of

his, oppressed as it was by "solicitude for all the churches," scatter the fragrance of delicious sweetness. See what manner of spices and aromatic elements he gathered together for himself: "I die daily, I protest by your glory," he says. Again, "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is scandalised and I am not on fire?" Vast stores of such precious material, exhibited in places known to you all, my brethren, did this wealthy man possess, to be used in confecting the "best ointments." For it was fitting that those breasts should be redolent of the purest and most excellent unguents; those breasts, I say, which suckled the mystical members of Christ, to whom St. Paul was certainly a mother, being in travail once and a second time, until Christ had been formed in them, and the members brought into conformity with the Head.

I will tell you also of another spiritually rich man, and how he kept a supply of select spices from which to produce these "best ointments." "The stranger," says holy Job, "did not stay without, my door was open to the traveller." And again, "I was an eye to the blind, and a foot to the lame. I was the father of the poor. I broke the jaws of the wicked man, and out of his teeth I took away the prey. If I have denied to the poor what they desired, and have made the eyes of the widow wait; if I have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; if I have despised him that was perishing for want of clothing, and the poor man that had no covering; if his sides have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep." With what a sweet perfume this man by his works must have filled the earth!

His every act was an aromatic spice. He heaped up his soul with such odoriferous elements in order that the fragrant exhalations of internal sweetness might temper the stench of his rotting flesh.

When Joseph had caused the whole of Egypt to run after him to the odour of his ointments, he also permitted their fragrance to reach even to those who had sold him into slavery. He did, indeed, use words of reproof, and he looked with an angry countenance. Yet the tears which burst forth from the softness of his heart were indicative, not of wrath, but of mercy. Samuel mourned for Saul who was seeking to kill him. His heart, melted within by the fire of that charity which warmed his breast, flowed out in tears of piety through the channels of his eyes. Regarding the pleasant odour of good fame which he scattered on every side, Holy Scripture bears this testimony : " And all Israel, from Dan to Bersabee, knew that Samuel was a faithful prophet of the Lord." What shall I say of Moses ? With what fatness and richness did not he also replenish his soul ! Not even that " exasperating house," in which he lived for a time, with all its murmuring, with all its madness, was able to rub off the oil wherewith his spirit had been anointed once and for all. Hence, amidst constant disputes and daily wranglings, he persevered unmoved in his meekness. Justly, therefore, does the inspired author testify of him that he " was exceeding meek above all men that dwelt upon earth," for even " with them that hated peace he was peaceful." So meek, in fact, was he, that not only did he not get angry with an ungrateful and rebellious people, but he even, by his intervention, appeased the anger of God enkindled

against them. So it is written: "And He said He would destroy them, had not Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them." Again, we read of him saying to God, "Either forgive them this trespass, or, if Thou do not, strike me out of the Book of Life which Thou hast written." Behold a man truly anointed with the unction of mercy! He speaks verily with the affection of a mother who can be contented with no happiness which her children do not share. Suppose, for instance, that a person of wealth said to a poor woman, "Come to my house and have dinner with me, but leave behind that infant which thou bearest in thy arms, lest it should begin to cry and cause us annoyance." Think you, my brethren, she would accept such an invitation? Would she not rather choose to suffer hunger than, abandoning her beloved child, to dine alone with her rich benefactor? So, neither would Moses be satisfied to "enter into the joy of his Lord," whilst the people remained without; for, inconstant though they were and ungrateful, yet he clung to them as would a mother to the child of her womb, and with a truly maternal affection. His heart, which they bitterly grieved, was more willing to endure this suffering than to bear the sorrow of seeing them torn from it.

Where shall we find a better model of meekness than David, who lamented the death of Saul, of the man, I say, who had always thirsted for his? What greater charity than thus to mourn for one whose removal brought himself to the throne? He was almost inconsolable at the loss of a parricidal son. What an abundance of the "best ointment" is revealed in such

an affection! No wonder, then, he could pray with confidence, saying, "O Lord, remember David and all his meekness." * Therefore, all these possessed those "best ointments," of which they are redolent even to-day throughout the universal Church. And not only they, but also every one who in this life shows himself so benevolent and beneficent, who tries to converse with such kindness amongst men, that instead of keeping for himself the graces he receives, he devotes them all, without exception, to the common use, considering himself, as St. Paul, a debtor alike to friends and enemies, "to the wise and the unwise." Because persons of this description are useful to all, and humble in all, therefore are they loved above all both by God and man, and the fragrance of their virtues "shall be in benediction." Those, I repeat, whose lives have been such, have perfumed with their precious ointments, not only the times in which they lived, but even all subsequent ages. Thou also, my brother, if thou willingly sharest with us, thy companions, the gifts thou hast received from above; if thou showest thyself everywhere amongst us obliging, affectionate, grateful, obedient, and humble: thou, also, shalt receive testimony of all that thou art redolent of the "best ointments." Yes, every individual amongst you, brethren, who not only supports with patience the corporal and spiritual infirmities of his brother, but, so far as he is

* Ps. cxxxi. 1. Concerning the authorship of this psalm there is some uncertainty. Cardinal Bellarmin writes, "Either it was composed by Solomon after the building of the Temple when the ark of the Lord was brought into the place prepared for it; or, at any rate, it was then sung by him, although David may have written it for that occasion, and given it to his son."—(Translator.)

permitted and has the power, assists him by kind offices, comforts him by his words, and directs him by his counsels, or, if the Rule will not allow of this, consoles the weakling, at least by his fervent and incessant prayer—every such person, I say, exhales a good odour in his community, and "smells sweet of the best ointments." As balsam in the mouth, so is such a religious in a monastery. His brothers point him out and say of him, "This is a lover of his brethren and of the people of Israel. This is he that prayeth much for the people and for all the holy city."

But let us now turn to the New Testament, and see if we can find there any reference to these "best ointments." We read in St. Mark that "Mary Magdalen, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought sweet spices that coming they might anoint Jesus." What were those ointments, so precious that they were purchased and prepared especially for the Body of Christ, and so abundant that they were sufficient for the anointing of every part of It! We nowhere find in the Gospel that any of the other two kinds of ointments were either procured or compounded for the special purpose of anointing the Lord, or that they were poured out over the whole of His Body. But a woman is suddenly introduced, in one place kissing His Feet and dropping unguent upon Them; in another, whether the same person or a different,* emptying out upon His

* The question as to whether the sinful woman mentioned in Luke vii. 36-50, Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus, and Mary Magdalen are one and the same, or two, or even three different persons has been keenly controverted from the earliest ages of the Church. Down to the beginning of the seventh century, the majority of writers seem to have distinguished between the three. But the authority of Pope St. Gregory (590-

sacred Head an alabaster box of precious oil. Yet here it is said, "they bought sweet spices that coming they might anoint Jesus." They did not buy the ointment, but the sweet spices. The perfume for the holy Body was not obtained ready made; it was freshly extracted by themselves from the aromatic elements. Neither was it applied to some particular part only, for instance, to the Head or the Feet. But, as it is written, "that coming they might anoint Jesus." What embraces the whole must not be restricted to a part.

Do you, also, my brethren, put on the bowels of mercy; show yourselves generous and kind, not alone to parents and relatives, not alone to those from whom you have received or hope to receive benefits, for even

604) gave the opinion in favour of their identity a preponderance which it still retains. St. Bernard, although he here speaks doubtfully, has adopted the latter view in his third sermon on the Assumption and elsewhere. MacEvilly calls it "the more probable opinion, yet still warmly disputed."

Another matter in dispute is the number of anointings. Is the anointing of the Saviour's Feet by the sinful woman, spoken of in Luke vii., the same as that mentioned in John xii.? St. Bernard evidently thinks so, and hence identifies Mary, the sister of Martha, with the "woman who was a sinner." But it is now generally believed that, although performed by the same person, the anointings were really distinct. As a matter of fact, there is much more reason for identifying the anointing described in Mark xiv. with that of John xii., which, however, St. Bernard assumes to be different, if not by different persons. Both took place at Bethany, the native village of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus; on both occasions the disciples complained of the waste; and on both our Lord answered them in the same words. True, St. Mark tells us it was the Head that was anointed, whilst according to St. John it was the Feet. But these statements are easily reconciled by supposing both narratives to be but partial accounts of the same event, and supplementary of each other.—(Translator.)

the heathens do this, but, according to the counsel of the Apostle, study to do good to all, so that, for God's sake, you will not refuse or withhold, even in the case of an enemy, any service you can render to body or soul. So shall it be manifest that you too abound with the "best ointments," and have purposed to perfume, as far as depends on you, not merely the Lord's Head or Feet, but His entire mystical Body, which is the Church. Perhaps the reason why the Lord Jesus would not have the ointment which had been prepared for Him, to be poured upon His dead Body, was that it might be reserved for His living Body. For the Church is living and eats of "the living Bread That came down from heaven." It is the Body which Christ loves best, which He will not suffer to taste death, whereas His natural Body was delivered up to death, as every Christian knows. It is His mystical Body that He wants us to anoint and to cherish ; and He desires us to apply the more special and efficacious medicaments to its weak members. For this, therefore, He would keep the precious ointment, when, anticipating the hour and hastening the glory of His Resurrection, He thus enlightened rather than refused the devotion of the holy women. If He was unwilling to be anointed, it was as sparing the unction, not as spurning it. He did not decline the service, but postponed it to a time when it would be a greater benefit. I am not now referring to any benefit from the material and corporal unction, but to the spiritual benefit symbolised by that. For this reason, therefore, He, the Master of piety, refused for Himself the best ointments of piety, because He wished they should be reserved for relieving the necessities, both corporal and spiritual,

of His own indigent members. When, a little earlier, ointment was poured on His Head and even on His Feet, and precious ointment too, did He forbid it? On the contrary, He reprimanded those that were presuming to do so. To Simon, who was angry that He should allow Himself to be touched by a sinner, He administered a reproof in the form of a lengthy parable. And when the disciples complained of the waste of ointment, He said to them, "Why are you troublesome to this woman?"

Sometimes (if I may here digress a little) when prostrate and in tears at the Feet of my Jesus, offering Him, at the thought of my sins, the "sacrifice of an afflicted spirit," or when standing at His Head (a grace more rare with me) and exulting in the memory of His benefits, I also have heard people complain and ask, "To what purpose is this waste?" They complained, I mean, that I was living for myself alone, when I might, as they supposed, be assisting many. "For this," they said, "could have been sold for much and given to the poor." But it would be an unprofitable traffic for me, if I gained the whole world and lost myself and my own soul. Hence, understanding such expressions of discontent to be the "dead flies," mentioned in Scripture, which destroy the fragrance of the ointment, I remembered the words of God: "O My people! they that bless thee, the same deceive thee." But let those who accuse me of taking my ease hear the Lord excusing me and answering for me. "Why," He asks, "are you troublesome to this woman?" That is to say, "You look on the face, and, therefore, you judge according to the face. He is not a man, as you suppose, who is able to stretch forth his hand

to hard things, but only a weak woman. Why would you lay a burden on him to which I see he is unequal? He is doing 'a good work upon Me.' Let him continue in this good, until he gets strength to do better. If ever he changes from a woman to a man, and to a perfect man, then he may also be employed in a manly and perfect work."

My brethren, let us look upon bishops with honour, and upon their labours with fear. We should never aspire to the episcopal dignity, if we considered the toil it involves. Let us, then, acknowledge the inadequacy of our powers, and let us not imagine that the soft and feeble shoulders of women such as we are, can support with ease the burdens of strong men. It is our duty to honour these men, and not to scrutinise their conduct with a critical eye. It would be intolerable that you should censure the work of those whose responsibilities you refuse to undertake,* just as it would be impertinence in a woman spinning at home to rebuke her warrior husband returning from battle. So, if a religious in his cloister should occasionally observe a secular cleric, who toils amongst the people, carrying himself with too much freedom or too little circumspection, for instance, sinning by excess in eating, in speaking, in sleeping, in hilarity, in anger, or in censure, let him not at once hasten to condemn, but let him remember what is written, "Better is the iniquity of a man, than a woman doing a good turn." For the monk, indeed, does well in keeping a watchful guard over himself. But he who labours for the good of the

* St. Bernard had already refused several episcopal and archiepiscopal sees, such as those of Rheims, Genoa, and Milan. —(Translator.)

people performs a more excellent and more manly work. And if this cannot be done without some degree of "iniquity," that is, without slight departures from strict regularity of life and conversation, we must bear in mind that "charity covereth a multitude of sins." So much with regard to those two temptations by which the devil incites religious persons either to ambition the dignity of bishops, or rashly to condemn them for their failings.

But we must now return to the ointments of the Spouse. Do you not perceive how much the ointment of Piety is to be preferred to those of Contrition and Devotion, from the fact that it alone is not allowed to be wasted? Indeed, so little is waste tolerated in the case of this "best ointment," that even the gift of a cup of cold water is not permitted to go unrequited. Precious, nevertheless, is the unguent of Contrition, which is extracted from the recollection of sin, and is poured upon the Lord's Feet, because "a contrite and humble heart God will not despise." Far more precious still is what I have named the ointment of Devotion, which is produced from the thought of the divine benefits, and is deemed worthy to be applied to the Saviour's Head. Hence God Himself says of it, "The sacrifice of praise shall glorify Me." But, as I have just remarked, superior to both is the unction of Piety, which is confected out of a sympathetic regard for the miserable, and which spreads its fragrance over the whole Body of Christ. I speak not of that Body Which hung upon the Cross, but of that mystical Body which He acquired by His Passion. This third ointment is indeed so excellent, that in comparison with it God declares the others to be unworthy of His notice,

where He says, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." In my judgment, therefore, the perfume of this virtue of mercy or piety is exhaled in a degree beyond all others from the breasts of the Spouse, who is doubtless anxious to conform herself in all things to the will of her Beloved. Did not Tabitha,* even in death, give forth the sweet fragrance of mercy? And therefore it was that she so quickly revived, because the odour of life in her prevailed over death.

Now, listen to an "abbreviated word," that is, a recapitulation of this subject. Whoever inebriates his neighbour with his words and perfumes him with his benefits, the same may consider as addressed to himself the eulogium, "For thy breasts are better than wine, smelling sweet of the best ointments." But who is sufficient for this? Which of us can spend even a single hour so justly and perfectly as not sometimes to grow unfruitful in speech or remiss in action? Yet there is one who can make such a boast with all truth and justice. I mean the Church, to which, in her universality, the means are never lacking both for inebriating and for perfuming. For what she wants in one of her members she possesses in another, according to the measure of the gift of Christ and the distribution of the Holy Spirit, "dividing to everyone as He willeth." In those who make unto themselves "friends of the mammon of iniquity," the Church exhales an odour of sweetness. She inebriates in the persons of her preachers, who pour out the wine of spiritual joy over the whole earth, intoxicate the nations therewith, and "bring forth fruit in patience." Thus she may confidently and securely call herself the Spouse, inasmuch as she

* Acts ix. 36-42.

possesses the " breasts better than wine, smelling sweet of the best ointments." But although none of us, my brethren, will be so presumptuous as to dare to call his soul the spouse of Christ, nevertheless, as we are members of the Church which rightly glories in this title, and in the reality corresponding to the title, we at least may each justly claim a participation in that high prerogative. What we possess all collectively in a complete and perfect manner, without doubt we also possess individually by participation. Thanks to Thee, Lord Jesus, Who hast vouchsafed to number us amongst the members of Thy Church, not alone that we might be Thy faithful servants, but also that, as spouses of Thine, we might be united to Thee in the sweet and chaste and everlasting embrace of love, and admitted to contemplate the glory of Thy unveiled Countenance, which glory is common to Thee with the Father and the Holy Ghost for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XIII

Glory belongs to God alone.

"Thy name is as oil poured out."

As the ocean, my brethren, is the source of all rivers and fountains, so is our Lord Jesus Christ the Well-Spring of all virtue and knowledge. For who but the "King of Glory" can be the "Lord of Virtues"? And, according to the Canticle of Anna, the same Lord is "the God of knowledge." Purity of body, diligent use of the affections (*industria cordis*), rectitude of will—all flow from this Divine Fountain. Yet not such graces only. Every intellectual endowment, every gift of eloquence, every pleasing disposition, must also be ascribed to the same Source. Thence is derived every word of wisdom and all knowledge, from Him, namely, "in Whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden." What, I ask, are chaste thoughts, just judgments, holy desires, but so many rivulets from that Divine Spring? Now, if the currents of natural water are ceaselessly pouring themselves back again into the sea through secret and subterranean channels, in order to return once more to us with unwearied service, for the satisfaction of our sight and supply of our necessities; why should not the spiritual streams, also, revert to their Source without interruption or diminution, so that they may revisit and irrigate anew the plains of our souls? Therefore, let the rivers of grace flow back to the Fountain-Head,

that they may again descend upon us. Let the heavenly tide re-seek its Origin that the earth may be watered with a more generous inundation. Do you ask how this is to be done? The Apostle tells you when he says, "In all things giving thanks." Whatever wisdom, whatever virtue you believe yourselves to possess, attribute it all to Christ, Who is the Wisdom and the Knowledge of God.

"But," you will say, "who would be so foolish as to presume to do otherwise?" No one, indeed. Even the Pharisee gives thanks. Nevertheless, his thanksgiving "hath no praise from God." If I remember aright what is said in the Gospel, his expression of gratitude did not make him more pleasing. Why? Because whatever devotion sounded from his lips, it was not sufficient to excuse the swelling of his heart in the eyes of Him Who "knoweth the high afar off." O Pharisee, remember that "God is not mocked." Thinkest thou that thou hast anything "which thou hast not received"? "Nothing," thou confessest, "and therefore I give thanks to the Giver." But, if so, then it is in view of no antecedent merit on thy part that thou hast received those graces of which thou art boasting. Assuming that thou dost admit this also, it is consequently, in the first place, the height of senseless arrogance in thee to despise the Publican, who for this reason alone has not so much as thou, because he has not gratuitously received so much. Secondly, consider well lest thou be not returning His gifts to God, whole and entire, but by fraudulently appropriating something to thyself of His honour and glory, mayst justly lay thyself open to the charge of theft, and theft against God. Wert thou openly to attribute to thyself some

credit for those things whereof thou art boasting, as if they were not only in thee, but from thee, I should rather believe thee to be in error than to have the will to commit an act of injustice, and consequently I should attempt to correct thy mistake. Now, however, by returning thanks, thou dost show that thou art ascribing nothing to thyself, but dost prudently acknowledge all thy merits to be the gifts of God. Hence, in contemning others, thou betrayest thyself and showest thyself " to have spoken with a double heart," with one heart lending thy lips to a lie, and with the other usurping the glory of truth. For thou couldst not have judged the Publican to be worthy of contempt in comparison with thyself, without esteeming thyself to be worthy of honour in comparison with him. But what wilt thou reply to the Apostle, who prescribes and enjoins that " to God alone be honour and glory " ? How canst thou answer the angels who distinguished and explained what God is pleased to reserve to Himself and what He condescends to share with mortals ? " Glory to God in the highest," sang they, " and on earth peace to men of good will." You see, my brethren, how the Pharisee gives thanks, honouring God indeed, but only with his lips, whilst he honours himself by the sentiments of his heart. Thus you may hear words of thanks from the mouths of many, but more out of custom or convention than from affection or conviction ; so much so, that the most abandoned criminals are wont to give thanks to God for having succeeded well and prosperously, as they imagine, in the accomplishment of their perverse purposes. Listen, for instance, to the thief, when he has brought his wicked machinations to a successful issue, and possessed

himself at last of some long-coveted booty. In his heart he exults with joy and exclaims, "Thanks be to God! I have not watched in vain; I have not lost my nocturnal labour." Does not the murderer similarly rejoice and return thanks that he has prevailed over a rival or avenged himself on an enemy? And the profligate, also, joyously gives praise to God for that he has at last attained the means of gratifying his evil passion.

It follows, my brethren, that not all thanksgiving is acceptable with God, but only that which proceeds from a chaste, sincere, and simple heart. I say a "chaste heart," to exclude those who glory in their evil deeds and for them return thanks. As if God, like themselves, could take pleasure in their wicked doings, and could exult in their abominations! He that is such a one shall hear addressed to him these words of reproach, "Thou thoughtest unjustly that I shall be like to thee, but I will reprove thee and set before thy face." I have said "from a sincere heart," on account of hypocrites, who appear indeed to attribute to God the merit of whatever good they possess, but glorify Him only with their lips, the heart withholding what the tongue concedes. And because "in His sight they do deceitfully," their "iniquity is found unto hatred." The one class impiously attribute to God their own crimes; the other fraudulently ascribe to themselves the gifts of God. So stupid, so ungodly, so brutish even is the former vice that there is no need for me to put you on your guard against it. The latter, however, is wont to beset the path of religious and spiritual persons, in particular. Of a surety, it is high virtue, and as rare as high, to be able to do great works

without esteeming oneself great, and to conceal one's sanctity from oneself alone whilst manifesting it to all others. To my thinking, there is no virtue so admirable as that a man should appear wonderful in the eyes of others and contemptible in his own. Thou art truly a faithful servant, if thou sufferest not to cling to thine own hands any part of whatever glory may redound from thy works to thy Lord, which glory, although it does not proceed from thee, yet passes through thee. Then, according to the Prophet, thou wilt "cast away avarice by oppression, and shake thy hands free from all bribes." Then, as the Lord commands, thy light will "shine before men," unto the glory, not of thyself, but of thy "Father, Who is in heaven." And thou wilt be an imitator of St. Paul and of other faithful preachers who preach not themselves, but Jesus Christ, just as thou seekest "not the things that are thine but the things which are of Jesus Christ." Wherefore, thou, also, shalt be greeted with the consoling words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things."

Joseph knew that his Egyptian master had entrusted to his care both his house and all his goods. But he also was well aware that there was one exception, namely, his mistress; and so he would not consent to her solicitations. "Behold," he said to the temptress, "my master hath delivered all things to me, neither is there anything which is not given into my power, or that he hath not delivered to me, but thee who art his wife." For he was not ignorant that "the glory of the man is the woman," and he considered that he would be making a return of basest ingratitude should he

tarnish the glory of one who had rendered himself so glorious. Being wise with the wisdom of God, he reflected that husbands are extremely jealous of their wives, as of their own honour, and are never willing to entrust them to the care of any other than themselves. Hence, he would not presume to stretch forth his hand to what was not permitted him. What then? Shall men be so sensitively jealous of their own glory, and shall they yet dare to defraud God of His, as if He were not also jealous? But hear what He Himself says, "I will not give My glory to another." What, then, O Lord, what wilt Thou give us? "Peace," He answers, "I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." It is enough for me. Thankfully do I receive what Thou, O Lord, leavest to me, and I leave to Thee what Thou reservest to Thyself. This division is pleasing to me. It is also, I doubt not, for my best interests. Glory I renounce altogether, lest, perchance, whilst I usurp what is not conceded, I justly forfeit even that which has been bestowed. Peace I want, peace I desire, and nothing more. He that is not satisfied with peace, is not satisfied with Thee. For Thou art "our Peace Who hath made both one." This is necessary for me, this is sufficient for me, to be reconciled to Thee and to be reconciled to myself. For since "Thou hast made me opposite to Thee, I am become burdensome to myself." I will be cautious henceforth neither to appear ungrateful for the gift of peace bestowed, nor a sacrilegious usurper of Thy divine glory. To Thee, O Lord, to Thee, let Thy glory remain inviolate. As for me, I shall be well content, if I can but preserve that peace which Thou hast given me.

When peace was restored to Israel by the overthrow of

Goliath, the people all participated in the joy, but David alone was glorified. Josue, Jephte, Gedeon, Samson, even Judith, though a woman, all in their day gloriously triumphed over their enemies. But, whereas the whole nation joyfully participated in the peace which they won, none was associated with them in glory. Judas Machabeus, also, distinguished himself by his numerous victories. Yet, when, by fighting bravely, he repeatedly brought peace to his exulting people, did he ever share his glory with anyone? "And then," we read, "there was great—not glory but—joy amongst the people." Wherein has the Creator of all fallen short of these, that He also should not enjoy a singular, incommunicable glory? Alone He created all things, alone He triumphed over His enemies, alone He redeemed the captives, and shall He be otherwise than alone in His glory? "And My own arm," He says, "hath saved for Me." Again, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the gentiles there is not a man with Me." What share, then, can I have in the victory, since I have had none in the combat? It is, therefore, the height of impudence in me to arrogate to myself either glory without victory, or victory without a fight. But, ye mountains, "receive peace for the people," receive for yourselves * also peace, not glory: this you must reserve to Him Who alone has both sustained the conflict and achieved the victory. So, I pray, so let it be. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." But he is evidently not a man of good, but of evil will, who, not content with peace, "with a haughty eye and an insatiable heart,"

* "Pacem suscipite vobis." Some readings have, "Pacem suscipite nobis"—"receive peace for us."—(Translator.)

is impatiently covetous of the glory of God, and so loses peace without compensating for its loss by the acquisition of glory. Who would believe the wall should it boast of having begotten the sunbeam which it receives through the window? Who would credit the clouds did they claim the rain as their offspring? To me it is clear enough that, although imperceptible to bodily sense, there must be some source other than the aqueducts for the currents of water, some other source for the words of wisdom besides the lips and teeth.

Whatever I behold in persons of sanctity, deserving of commendation or admiration, on examining it by the clear light of truth, I discover that there is One Who is really praiseworthy and wonderful, and another who appears so; and I "praise God in His saints," whether in Eliseus or in the great Elias, both resuscitators of the dead. They indeed exhibit to our view things strange and marvellous, yet not by their own power, but as ministers of Another. It is God, dwelling in them, "Who doth the works." Invisible and inaccessible in Himself, He is manifest and "wonderful in His saints." He is alone wonderful "Who alone doth wonderful things." The beautiful writing or drawing is no merit of the pen's, neither can the tongue nor the lips glory in the good word that proceeds from them. But it is time that a prophet also should speak. "Shall the axe boast itself," asks Isaias, "against him that cutteth with it? or shall the saw exalt itself against him by whom it is drawn? As if a rod should lift itself up against him that lifteth it up, and a staff exalt itself which is but wood, so against the Lord is everyone that glorieth, if he glory not in the Lord." "If I must glory," St. Paul teaches me whereof I must

glory and wherein. "This," he says, "is our glory, the testimony of our conscience." Securely shall I glory if, conscience being my witness, I arrogate to myself none of the Creator's glory. Securely indeed, because thus I shall glory not against, but in the Lord. Such glorying is not only not forbidden us, but it is even strongly commended in the words, "You receive glory one from another, and the glory which is from God alone you do not seek." And truly the grace to glory in God alone can come from God alone. Nor is this an insignificant glory, being as true as it is from Truth, and so rare, in truth, that only the small number of the perfect perfectly glory in it. Therefore, let the "vain sons of men," "let the lying sons of men" go and "by vanity deceive together." As for him who wisely glories, he will prove his work and examine it diligently by the light of truth. So shall he have glory in himself, not in the mouth of another. I should be a fool to lock up my glory in the coffer of men's lips so that I should have to beg it of them whenever I wanted it. For as it depends on their will whether to approve or to censure me, so my glory or disgrace would be equally in their power. But I keep my glory under my own care. I myself with more fidelity shall guard it for myself. Nay, not even to myself do I entrust it. I rather deposit it with Him, Who "is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day," careful to preserve, faithful to restore. "Then shall every man have (secure) praise from God," every man, that is, who has despised human praise. For changed to confusion shall be the glory of those who relish only the things of earth, according to the testimony of David, "God hath scattered the bones of them

that please men: they have been confounded because God hath despised them."

My brethren, knowing this, none of you should desire to be praised in this life, for you steal from God whatever of glory you appropriate to yourselves, without referring it to Him. What title, O filthy dust, what title canst thou pretend to glory? Is it sanctity of life? "But it is the Spirit That sanctifieth," not surely thine, but the Spirit of God. And even wert thou renowned for signs and wonders, still it is by the divine power these are wrought, although by thy agency. Or, perhaps, thou groundest thy claim on thy possession of popular favour, because, perhaps, thou utterest the "good word," and, perhaps, to some advantage? But it is Christ Who has given thee "a mouth and wisdom." For thy tongue—what is it but "the pen of a scrivener"? And such as it is, thou but holdest it on loan. It is a talent entrusted to thee and shall be demanded back with interest. If thou be found zealous in the discharge of duty, and faithful in handing over the profits, thou shalt receive the reward of thy labours. Otherwise, thy talent shall be taken from thee, and, nevertheless, the interest still exacted, and thou shalt be accounted "a wicked and slothful servant." Consequently, my brethren, let all the glory arising from the gifts of the manifold grace appearing in you, be referred to Him Who is the Author and Giver of all things praiseworthy. But let this be done not merely with the lips, as by hypocrites, nor solely from custom, as by worldlings, nor yet out of necessity, as beasts are compelled to carry their burdens, but as becomes saints, with trustful simplicity, with fervent devotion, with a happy, yet

modest and reserved cheerfulness. Accordingly, whilst offering up "the sacrifice of praise," and "paying our vows" from day to day, let us be careful with all vigilance to unite attention with usage, affection with attention, joy with affection, reverence with joy, humility with reverence, and with humility liberty of spirit. So shall we sometimes find ourselves moving forward towards the goal with the easy steps of a purified mind, making excursions out of ourselves through the extraordinary intensity of our affections and spiritual raptures, experienced in transports of joy, in the light of God, in sweetness, in the Holy Ghost; and thus shall we prove ourselves to be included in the number of those whom the Prophet David addressed when he said, "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy Countenance, and in Thy name they shall rejoice all the day, and in Thy justice they shall be exalted."

Perchance it may here be said to me, "Thou dost well to admonish us, yet thy words should not be irrelevant to thy theme." But have patience a little. I have not lost sight of my subject. Have I not taken upon myself to expound the text, "Thy name is as oil poured out"? This is the task I have set myself, this the work I have undertaken.* And it is for you to judge whether my remarks have been altogether beside the purpose or not. For my part, I will try to show you in a few words that I have not wandered far from my way. Do you not recollect that the last thing commended in connexion with the breasts of the Spouse was the delicious odour of their ointments? What, then, more seasonable than to remind the Spouse that

* "Hoc opus, hic labor est." Evidently a reminiscence of the Virgilian "Hic opus, hic labor est"—*Æn.* VI. 129.—(Translator.)

she owes this fragrance to the bounty of her Beloved, lest she should be tempted to ascribe it to herself? And this, as you can see, has been the drift of all my apparently wandering remarks. "The sweet odour and the delights of my breasts," we may fancy the Spouse saying, "I attribute neither to my own efforts nor merits, but to Thy munificence, O my Beloved; all is due to the perfume of Thy name which is as oil poured out upon me." Thus is apparent the connexion of my present text with that of my last discourse, as also the relevancy of what I have been saying.

But the full exposition of this text, whence I took occasion to speak at such great length on the most detestable vice of ingratitude, must be reserved for another time and another sermon. For the present let it suffice to have reminded you that, if even the Spouse dares not appropriate to herself anything whatever of her virtues and graces, how much less should we presume to do so, who are but the "handmaidens"? Let us, therefore, my brethren, let us also exclaim, following the example of the Spouse, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory." And let us say this, not merely in words and with our tongues, "but in deed and in truth." Otherwise, of us, too, it shall be said, what I fear exceedingly, "And they loved Him with their mouth, and with their tongue they lied unto Him. But their heart was not right with Him, nor were they counted faithful in His covenant." Let us, then, cry aloud, but as well in the depths of our hearts as with the lips of our mouths, let us cry, I repeat, "Save us, O Lord, our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to Thy holy name—not to our own names—and may glory —not in our but—in Thy praise," for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XIV

The Church and the Synagogue.

"Thy name is as oil poured out."

"In Judæa God is known: His name is great in Israel." "The (Gentile) people that walked in darkness have seen a great Light." That is, they saw the Light which shone in Judæa and in Israel, and they desired to "draw near and to be illuminated," so that they who "in times past were not a people might now be a people of God," and that for the future, "their place might be in peace," the one Corner-Stone uniting in Itself the two walls approaching from different directions. They derived confidence from the words of invitation which had already been spoken by the Holy Ghost through the Psalmist, "Rejoice, ye nations, with His people." Therefore, they wished to draw near; but the Synagogue forbade it, declaring that the Church of the Gentiles was unclean and unworthy, reproaching it with the filth of idolatry and with the blindness of ignorance. "On what merit dost thou presume?" asks the Jew; "Touch me not!" "But why?" replies the Gentile. "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? And if I am wanting in merit, He is not wanting in compassion. Is justice His only attribute? Nay, He is also merciful. O Lord, 'let Thy tender mercies come unto me and I shall live.' 'Many, O Lord, are Thy mercies! Quicken me according to Thy judgment,'

which is tempered with mercy." What will He do, the just and merciful Lord, whilst the Jew thus glories in the Law, applauds his own justice, disclaims any need of mercy, and despises such as confess this need; and the Gentile, on the contrary, acknowledging his sin, avows his unworthiness, deprecates justice, and appeals to mercy? What, I ask, will He do, the Judge, and such a Judge, in Whom judgment and compassion are both so inherent that the one is as inseparable from Him as the other? What can be more natural and reasonable for Him to do than to give to each of them that which he prayed for—judgment to the Jew and mercy to the Gentile? The Jew asks for judgment, well, then, let him have it. But let the Gentile, according to his prayer, glorify the mercy of God. And the judgment granted to the Jew is this, that he who contemns the compassionate justice of God, and wishes to establish his own—which, in truth, rather accuses than justifies—shall be abandoned to the oppression, not to the justification, of his own righteousness.

This Jewish justice comes from the Law, which has never conducted anyone to perfection. It is a yoke which neither the Jews " nor their fathers have ever been able to bear." But the Synagogue is strong. She has no liking for burdens that are light or for yokes that are sweet. The Jew is well, and has no need of the Physician, no need of the unction of the Spirit. " He trusted in " the Law: " let it now deliver him," if it can. But the Law which was given him has not the power to vivify. It rather kills, according to the Apostle, who says, " the letter killeth." The same is implied in the words of Christ, " Therefore I say unto you, you shall die in your sins." This, then, O

Synagogue, is the judgment thou hast challenged on thy error. Blinded shalt thou be left, blinded and pertinacious, "until the fulness of the Gentiles—whom thou dost arrogantly contemn and enviously repel—shall come in," and shall acknowledge the "God Who is known in Judæa" and the name that is "great in Israel." It was for this judgment Jesus "came into this world, that they who see not may see, and that they who see may become blind." Yet this "blindness hath happened in Israel in part" only, "for the Lord will not cast off His people" entirely. He will "reserve unto Himself as a seed" the apostles and the "multitude of believers who had but one heart and one soul." Neither "will He cast them off for ever," but will "save a remnant." Once more will He "receive Israel, His servant," and He will be "mindful of His mercy." So that not even in regard to them, in whom she now finds no room for herself, shall mercy desert her companion, justice. Did God treat the Jew as he deserved, assuredly there would be "judgment without mercy to him who doth not mercy." For Judæa, possessing much of the oil of the knowledge of God, like a miser, keeps it shut up in the vase. I, the Gentile, beg for some, and she neither "hath mercy nor lendeth." She alone must have worship, she alone must have knowledge, she alone must know "His great name." Nor is this desire for monopoly due to any zeal for her own glory, but rather to jealousy of me.

Therefore, do Thou, O Lord, "judge my judgment," and let Thy great name be magnified still more, and let the oil, which is already plentiful, be more abundantly multiplied. Let it increase, let it brim over, let

it be poured abroad, let it overflow to the Gentiles, and let "all flesh" experience "the salvation of God." How can it be, as the ungrateful Jew would have it, that all the saving unction should remain in "the beard of Aaron"? It belongs not to the beard, but to the Head. And the Head is head, not only of the beard, but of the whole body as well. Let the beard receive the descending ointment first by all means, but not solely. Let it transmit to the inferior members what it derives from the Head. Let the heavenly oil descend, let it descend even to the breasts of the Church, which, with a hungry eagerness, does not disdain to squeeze it from the beard, until, saturated with the dew of grace, she joyously exclaims, to prove herself not ungrateful, "Thy name is as oil poured out." But let it, I pray, descend even lower, let it trickle down as far as "the skirt of his garment," that is, even unto me, who, though the lowest and the most unworthy of all, still am of "the garment." For even I, as "a little one in Christ," demand for myself, on the title of piety, a share of that oil from the breasts of mother Church. And should any man murmur, whose "eye is evil because the Lord is good," do Thou, O Lord, answer for me. "Let my judgment come forth from Thy Countenance," and not from Israel's haughty lips. Rather I should say, "answer for Thyself," and say to Thy calumniator—for he calumniates Thee because Thou dost benefit one so undeserving—say to him, therefore, "I will also give to this last even as to thee." The Pharisee is displeased. Yet why should he grumble? My title is the Judge's good will. Surely there can be no juster standard of merit, as certainly there can be no more generous measure of reward. "Or is it

not lawful for Him to do what He willeth," in regard to that which is His own? It is a mercy to me, but no wrong to thee. "Take what is thine, and go thy way." If it is His good pleasure to save even me, what dost thou lose thereby?

Magnify thy merits as much as thou pleasest, and make much of thy labours. But "the mercy of the Lord is better than lives." I confess, I have not "borne the burden of the day and the heat." I am only bearing, according to the will of the Father of the family, a "sweet yoke" and a "light burden." I have been at work scarcely an hour; or, if longer, I have not felt it through excess of love. Let the Jew prove his own strength. As for me, I prefer to "prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God." From it I make good all that has been lost to me in work and time. The Jew relies on the articles of a formal agreement, I on the good pleasure of the Divine Will. "I believe and it shall not be reputed unto folly to me," for there is "life in His good will." It will reconcile to me the Father, it will restore to me the inheritance I have lost, and even with a more plentiful grace; for it will admit me to a participation in the ineffable delights and the delicious music, and the sweet singing, and the high feasting of God's exulting family. If my "elder brother," that is, the Jew, be indignant with me, and would rather eat a "kid" with his friends outside than the "fatted calf" with me in his Father's house, he shall receive this answer to his complaints: "It is fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is come to life again, he was lost and is found." Still does the Synagogue feast outside with her friends, the demons,

who are well pleased to see her in her folly voraciously gorging herself with the kid of sin, and, in a manner, concealing and stowing it away in the stomach of her ignorance and stupidity. Meantime, despising the justice of God and anxious to establish her own, she proclaims that she has no sin, nor any need that the Fatted Calf, that is, Christ, should be slain for her sake; since, as she fancies, she has been cleansed and justified by the works of the Law. But now when the veil of the "letter that killeth" has been rent by the death of the crucified Word, the Church, under the impulse of the Spirit of liberty, rushes boldly into the sanctuary, into the holy of holies, obtains recognition from the Bridegroom, finds favour in His eyes, is given the place of her rival, becomes a Spouse, and supplants the Synagogue in the affection and embraces of the Beloved. Then, in fervour of spirit, clinging and closely united to Christ the Lord, Who distils and pours all over her "the oil of His gladness," in a measure greater than is given to "her fellows," she exclaims, "Thy name is as oil poured out." What wonder if *she* is anointed who clasps the "Anointed of the Lord"?

The Church, then, reposes inside, but as yet only the Church of the perfect. However, even for us there is hope. Therefore, "rejoicing in hope," let us, who are still imperfect, keep watch before the doors. Let none as yet lodge within, save the Bridegroom and His Bride, that they may enjoy their secret and mutual embraces, undisturbed by any clamour of carnal passions, by any tumult of sensible images. But let the throng of "young damsels" who cannot yet be free from such interior perturbations, abide without. Let them keep an eye on the door. Let them watch in confidence, knowing

that to themselves is addressed what they read, "After her shall virgins be brought to the King, her neighbours shall be brought to Thee." And that each may know "of what spirit he is," by virgins I mean those souls which, betrothed to Christ before they could be defiled by contact with the world, have persevered in fidelity to Him Whose spouses they became all the more happily the more early. The "neighbours" or "damsels" are they who were once "conformed to this world," who abandoned themselves to "the princes of this world," viz., to the foul demons, unto every kind of uncleanness, but who now, ashamed of the past, and putting on the likeness of the new man, are striving, with only the more diligence because so late, to purify themselves from the stains of their former sinfulness. Let both virgins and damsels go forward. Let them yield neither to faintness nor to fatigue, although they do not yet experience in themselves that feeling which would cause them also to exclaim with the Spouse, "Thy name is as oil poured out." For such young persons have not the courage to speak directly to the Bridegroom. Yet if they are only faithful in following the footsteps of their mistress, the Bride, they shall be permitted to enjoy at least the odour of the oil, and thus shall be stimulated to desire and to solicit still more precious favours.

I am not ashamed, my brethren, to acknowledge that I myself very often, and particularly in the beginning of my conversion, used to seek with a hard and frozen heart Him Whom my soul wished to love. For I could not yet love Him Who as yet had not been found. Or, at any rate, I could not love Him as much as I desired; and for this reason I sought Him, in order to love Him more, Whom certainly I should not have sought at all

unless I already loved Him in some degree. Whilst, then, I sought Him in Whom my cold and languid spirit might find warmth and repose, nowhere did I meet anyone who could help me by dissolving the stiffening frost which held my interior faculties in bondage, and by restoring the pleasant spring of spiritual joy. Thus my soul grew daily more languid, and weary, and inert. Filled with disgust, I became sad almost to despair, and muttered within myself, "Who shall stand before the face of His cold?" Until on a sudden, perhaps at the word, perhaps at the sight of some spiritual and perfect man, occasionally even at the thought of one dead or absent, "the winds blew and the waters ran," and "my tears were my bread day and night." What is this but the odour exhaling from the unguent wherewith such a one was anointed? It could not be the ointment itself, inasmuch as it reached me only through a human medium. Hence, whilst rejoicing in the favour, I felt at the same time confounded and humiliated, because it was only a slight breath of the perfume, and not a bountiful unction that was vouchsafed me. My sense of smell was gratified, but not my sense of touch. I therefore knew that I was too unworthy for God to manifest His sweetness to me immediately. And if the same thing should happen again, I would indeed eagerly accept the favour bestowed and feel duly grateful. But grieving I should grieve that I had not deserved to receive it from God directly and, as the saying is, from hand to hand, though this I earnestly implored. I feel ashamed to be more affected at the thought of a man than at the thought of God. And then I cry out with tears, "When shall I come and appear before the face of God?" I suppose some of yourselves have had the same experi-

ence, and have it sometimes still. Herein what are we to understand except that either our pride is being humbled, or our humility protected, or fraternal charity fostered, or holy desires enkindled? One and the same thing is medicine for the sick and food for the convalescent; it gives strength to the weak and pleasure to the strong. One and the same food cures our distempers and preserves our health. It nourishes the body whilst pleasing the palate.

We must now go back to the words of the Spouse. But let us so hasten to hear what she says that we may also endeavour to understand her wisdom. This Spouse, as I have remarked already, is the Church. She it is to whom "much hath been forgiven because she loveth much." The reproaches addressed to her by her rival, even these she has turned to her advantage. Thus she has become more docile under correction, more patient in labour, more ardent in love, more prudent in self-restraint, more humble for the consciousness of her failings, more acceptable for her modesty, more prompt in obedience, more devout and fervent in returning thanks. And whilst the Synagogue, as has been said, murmurs and talks of her merits, and her labours, and "the burden of the day and the heat," the Church is only mindful of the divine munificence, saying, "His name is as oil poured out."

This surely "is the testimony of Israel to praise the name of the Lord." Not, indeed, of Israel "according to the flesh," but of Israel "according to the spirit." For how could the carnal Israel speak in that way? Not that he lacks oil, but he has not his "oil poured out." Oil he has, but he keeps it concealed; he keeps it in his law-books rather than in his heart. He clings to the rind of the letter. He holds in his clutch a full

vase. But it is sealed and he refuses to open it, even to anoint himself. O Israel, the spiritual unction is within, it is in the interior. Open and anoint thyself, and be no longer "a provoking house." Where is the use of having oil in thy vessels unless thou feelest it also on thy members? What avails it to read and re-read the sweet name of the Saviour in thy books if the sweetness of His love and service has no place in thy life? His name is oil. Only pour it out and thou shalt experience its virtue, which is threefold. But since the Jew despises my appeal, do you, my brethren, attend. I want to tell you what I have not yet explained, viz., why the name of the Beloved is compared to oil. There are, as far as I can see, three reasons. And forasmuch as He is called by many names, because none that is adequate can be found (He being ineffable) we have first to invoke the Holy Spirit that He would deign to reveal to us that one name out of the many, which He wishes to be understood in this place; for it has not been His good pleasure to consign it to writing. But this must await another discourse. For even if I had now the necessary knowledge, and neither you were burdened nor I fatigued, the lateness of the hour would still compel me to finish. Hold fast what I have to-day invited your attention to, so that to-morrow there may be no necessity to repeat. This is my purpose, this the task I am undertaking, namely, to show you why the Beloved's name is compared to oil, and which one of His names. And seeing that I cannot say anything of myself, I exhort you to pray that "a mouth and wisdom" may be given me, through His Spirit, by the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, to Whom be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XV

On the Names of God, and the Name of Jesus.

"Thy name is as oil poured out."

"The Spirit of wisdom is benevolent." He is not accustomed to make Himself difficult of access to those who invoke Him. Often even before we call upon Him, He says, "Behold, I am here." Listen, then, to the inspirations which, at your prayer and for your sakes, He has been pleased to favour me with, concerning those questions postponed from yesterday until the present; and reap the seasonable fruits of your own intercession. Behold, I am going to tell you the name which is rightly compared to oil, and to explain for what reason. We find many names of the Bridegroom scattered through the inspired pages. I will reduce them all to two. You will discover none, as I think, which does not signify either the riches of His mercy, or the power of His majesty. So speaks the Holy Ghost through one of His most familiar organs, that is, through David, "These two things have I heard, that power belongeth to God and mercy to Thee, O Lord." We find it written with regard to His majesty, "Holy and terrible is His name," and with respect to His mercy, "There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." Further testimonies will confirm what I say. "And this," says Jeremias, "is the name that they shall call Him, the Lord, our Just One"—which is a name of

power or majesty. According to Isaias, "His name shall be called Emmanuel"—a name of mercy. Again Christ says of Himself, "You call me Master and Lord." The former is a name of mercy, the latter of majesty. I say Master is a name of mercy, for it is as much an exercise of mercy to impart knowledge to the mind as to supply food to the body. Again Isaias tells us, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace." Of these titles the first, third, and fourth are expressive of majesty, the others of mercy. Which then, is the name "as oil poured out"? Evidently, the name of majesty and power is transfused in a manner into that of mercy and grace, and the result, which is, so to speak, an amalgam of all, abundantly poured out in Jesus Christ Our Saviour. Is not the name "God," for instance, merged and transfused into that of "God-with-us," that is, into "Emmanuel"? So is "Admirable" into "Counsellor." So is "God the Mighty" into the titles "Father of the world to come," and "Prince of Peace." So is "The Lord our Just One" into "Compassionate and merciful Lord." In this I am speaking of nothing new. In olden times the names Abram and Sarai were similarly merged and transfused into Abraham and Sara, respectively; and so we recognise that even then the mystery of this salutary effusion was celebrated and foreshadowed.

Where now is that awful "I am the Lord! I am the Lord!" which, spoken with a voice of thunder, used to resound with equal terror and frequency in the ears of the ancients? I have a prayer, dictated to me by Christ, the beginning of which, sweetened with the name of Father, guarantees a favourable hearing for

the petitions which follow. Servants are called friends. And it is not to disciples, but to His "brethren" the Saviour's Resurrection is announced. No wonder that, "when the fulness of time was come," a pouring out of the holy name took place, God fulfilling what He promised by the mouth of Joel, and pouring out of His Spirit upon all flesh. No wonder, I say, since I read of something similar having occurred even amongst the Hebrews of old. I suppose your thoughts anticipate my words, and that you already guess what I am about to say. What, I ask, was the meaning of the name "I am Who am," and "He Who is hath sent me to you," first given in answer to the question of Moses? It is doubtful if even Moses himself could have understood that name had it not been poured out. But it was fused and poured and so comprehended. And not only poured, but even poured out, for already it had been poured in or infused*; already it was possessed by the inhabitants of heaven; already it had become familiar to the angels. But now it was dispersed abroad. It had been communicated by infusion to the celestial spirits in such a manner that they held it as an intimate possession. It was now poured out even upon men, so that, if the hateful wilfulness of an ungrateful people did not hinder it, the thankful cry, "Thy name is as

* "Sed fusum est et captum, nec modo fusum sed et effusum quia jam infusum." The play upon words here is absolutely untranslatable. The holy Preacher appears to consider the great name of God as a solid substance, that requires to be fused or melted down before it can be contained in the small and frail vessel of created intelligence. After fusion, viz., in a manner suited to a finite capacity, it was poured in or infused into the angelic mind, whence later, at the Burning Bush, it was poured out to Moses, and through him to the human race.—(Translator.)

oil poured out," would have gone up to God from the universal earth. For he says Himself, " I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Run, ye nations! Salvation is at hand. That name has been poured out, which whosoever shall invoke shall be saved. The God of angels calls Himself the God of men, also! He hath poured oil upon Jacob, and caused it to fall upon Israel. Say to your brothers, " Give us of your oil." Should they refuse, then pray the Lord of the oil Himself to pour it out upon you. Say to Him, " O Lord, ' Take away our reproach.' Do not, we implore Thee, permit the malevolent one, viz., Satan, to insult Thy beloved one, whom Thou hast been pleased to call to Thee from the ends of the earth, by a condescension proportionate to her unworthiness. Is it fitting, I ask, that a wicked servant should exclude those whom the gracious Father of the family hath invited? ' I am,' Thou sayest, ' the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' But is it of these only? Pour out, oh, pour out Thy name still wider! Still more generously ' open Thy hand and fill every animal with blessing.' Let them ' come from the east and the west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.' ' Let them come, let them come, the tribes, the tribes of the Lord; the testimony of Israel to praise the name of the Lord.' Let them come, and sit down, and feast, and be filled with gladness. Let but this one song re-echo everywhere, ' Thy name is as oil poured out,' ' with the voice of joy and praise, the noise of one feasting.' " One thing, my brethren, I feel sure of, namely, that, if Philip and Andrew be the porters, we shall never meet with a repulse when we go begging for oil, when we

want to see Jesus. As of old, Philip will immediately speak to Andrew, and both Philip and Andrew will speak to Jesus. But what will Jesus answer? Doubtless the same which He spoke once before, "Unless the grain of wheat, falling into the ground, dieth, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Therefore, let the Divine Grain die that the crop of the gentiles may spring up. For "thus it behoveth Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, and that penance and remission of sins should be preached in His name," not alone in Judæa, but throughout all nations; so that from the one name of Christ, countless millions of believers should be called Christians, and should exclaim in chorus, "Thy name is as oil poured out."

In this, that is, in the name of Christ, I recognise the name which we read of in the Prophet Isaias, "He shall call His servants by another name, in which he, that is blest upon the earth, shall be blessed in God, amen." O name of benediction! O oil everywhere poured out! Do you ask how widely it has been poured out? From heaven it overflowed to Judæa, and from Judæa through the world at large, so that from the whole earth the Church sends up the wondering cry, "Thy name is as oil poured out." "Poured out" in truth, since not only has it overrun heaven and earth but even the dwellers beneath the earth have been sprinkled therewith, "that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth and that every tongue should confess" and should say, "Thy name is as oil poured out." Behold the name of Christ! Behold the name of Jesus! Both were infused into the angels. Both

were effused upon men, upon those men, who like beasts, "had rotted in their filth," and they, these holy names, "saved men and beasts, as God hath multiplied His mercy." How precious this name, this oil! Yet how cheap, too. How cheap, and yet how salutary! Were it not cheap, it would not be poured out for one like me. Were it not salutary, it could not have saved me. I participate in the name; I participate also in the inheritance. I am a Christian; I am, therefore, the brother of Christ. If I am really what I am called, I am "the heir of God and a co-heir with Christ." And what wonder is it that the name of the Bridegroom is thus poured out, since He has poured out even Himself? For, "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." And the Psalmist says, speaking in His name, "I am poured out as water." The fulness of the Divinity, whilst dwelling corporally on earth, was poured out, so that all of us, who live in the flesh, might receive of that fulness, and, recreated with its life-giving odour, might exclaim, "Thy name is as oil poured out." You now understand what name has been poured out, and how, and to what extent.

But wherefore is it compared to oil? This I have not yet explained. I was beginning to do so in the preceding discourse, when something suddenly occurred to me which I thought necessary to premise. The digression has been more lengthy than I anticipated, for no other reason, as I think, than because Wisdom, "the valiant woman, hath put out her hand" to the distaff, "and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle." Well she knew how to draw out into a long thread my scanty stock of wool or flax, and to stretch it to the

breadth of the loom, so that "all her domestics might be clothed with double garments." There is, doubtless, a striking analogy between oil and the name of the Beloved, nor is the comparison made by the Holy Spirit quite an arbitrary one. Unless you can suggest something better, I will say that the name of Jesus bears resemblance to oil in the threefold use to which the latter lends itself, namely, for lighting, for food, and for healing. It feeds the flame, it nourishes the flesh, it soothes pain. It is light, and food, and medicine. Consider now how the same properties belong to the Bridegroom's name. When preached, it gives light; when meditated, it nourishes; when invoked, it soothes and softens. But let us examine each point in detail.

Whence, think you, that great light of faith, and as sudden as great, throughout the whole world, except from the preaching of the name of Jesus? Was it not by the refulgence of this name that God called us "into His marvellous light," to whom thus illuminated, and contemplating the Light by this light, St. Paul truly says, "You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord"? This is the name which the same Apostle was charged to "carry before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." He bore this name about as a lamp. With it he illuminated his native land, crying out everywhere, "The night is passed, and the day is at hand. Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day." And he directed the gaze of all to the Candle * on the Candlestick, by everywhere

* "Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick that it may shine to all that are in the house" (Matt. v. 15). St. Bernard appears to be the only writer who has applied these words to the Crucified, "the Light of the

preaching " Jesus and Him crucified." Oh, with what splendour this light shone forth and dazzled the eyes of all beholders, when, flashing like the lightning flame from Peter's mouth, it strengthened the corporeal " feet and soles " of one person physically lame, and enlightened the eyes of many others, who were spiritually blind! Surely it glittered with fiery scintillations when the same Peter pronounced the words, " In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk."

But the name of Jesus is not merely light. It is food as well. Do you not, my brethren, experience an increase of strength as often as you recall it? What can so enrich the soul that reflects upon it? What can so reinvigorate the weary mind, fortify the virtues, engender good and honourable dispositions, foster holy affections? Dry is every kind of spiritual food, which this oil does not moisten. Insipid, whatever this salt does not season. If thou writest, thy composition has no charms for me, unless I read there the name of Jesus. If thou disputest or conversest, I find no pleasure in thy words, unless I hear there the name of Jesus. Jesus is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, jubilation in the heart.*

Yet not alone is that name light and food. It is also medicine. Is any amongst you sad? Let the name of Jesus enter his heart; let it leap thence to

World." Yet surely the application is as obvious as it is beautiful. It is in the same sense that St. Augustine speaks of the Cross as the Master's chair, " Cathedra Christi." But the metaphor of the candle and candlestick seems to be much more felicitous.—(Translator.)

* 'Jesus mel in ore, in aure melos, in corde jubilus." Compare with stanza 22 of the beautiful hymn, "Jubilus Rythmicus

his mouth ; and lo ! the light that radiates from that name shall scatter every cloud and restore tranquillity. Has some one perpetrated a crime, and, moreover, abandoning hope, is rushing in desperation towards " the snare of death " ? Let him but invoke this vivifying name, and straightway he shall experience a renewal of courage, and a revival of confidence. What hardness of heart, common as it is with some, what torpidity of sloth, what rancour of spirit, what weariness of disgust has ever been able to resist the potent influence of this all-saving name ? What exhausted fountain of devotional tears has not, at the invocation of the name of Jesus, sent forth a fuller and a sweeter flood ? Who ever, when trembling with terror in the presence of danger, has not immediately felt his spirits revive and his fears departing as soon as he called upon this name of power ? Who ever, agitated and buffeted by the billows of doubt, has not perceived his mind to be suddenly illuminated with the clear light of certitude, the moment he invoked this illustrious name ? Who ever, overwhelmed by misfortune, and already on the point of succumbing, has not been strengthened in mind by an infusion of fortitude when he pronounced this helpful

de Nomine Jesu," used by the Church for the Feast of the Holy Name :—

" Jesu decus angelicum,
In aure dulce canticum,
In ore mel mirificum,
In corde nectar coelicum."

Even apart from the testimony of a constant tradition, the close resemblance in language and sentiment between parts of this sermon and the " Jubilus " leaves us very little room for doubting that the two have come from the same author. From the same sermon are taken the lessons for the second nocturn of the Feast of the Holy Name.—(Translator.)

name? For this name is the sovereign remedy for all those various maladies and languors of the soul. By using it thus we may test the truth of the promise, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me." There is nothing so efficacious as the name of Jesus for restraining the violence of anger, depressing the swellings of pride, healing the smarting wound of envy, curbing the passions of the flesh, extinguishing the fire of concupiscence, tempering the thirst of avarice, and banishing every unlawful desire. For when I name the name Jesus, I call to mind a Man Who is "meek and humble of Heart," Who is kind, sober, chaste, and merciful, and perfect in all goodness and sanctity, and Who is, at the same time, the great Almighty God, Who restores me to health by His example, and strengthens me by His help. All this sounds in my ear whenever I hear the name of Jesus. I find models for my imitation in His Humanity, and assistance to copy them in His Omnipotence. The examples of His mortal life I use as medicinal herbs which I prepare with the assistance of His divine power, and so make for myself an efficacious restorative such as no human physician can compound.

Such an electuary, O my soul, thou canst find stored up in the little vessel of the name Jesus. So salutary is it, that it shall never prove ineffectual against any spiritual ailment whatsoever. Keep it always in thy bosom, keep it ever in thy hand, so that every thought and act of thine may be directed to Jesus. He Himself invites thee to this in the words, "Put Me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm." But of this later. Now I merely indicate where thou canst discover a medicine for thy arm and a medicine for thy heart.

Thou hast, I say, in the name of Jesus, the means of correcting thy evil actions and of making perfect such as are deficient in goodness. Therein, also, shalt thou find the means of preserving thy affections incorrupt, or of purifying them from defilement already contracted.

Amongst the children of Judæa there have been several others called Jesus, and she glories in the empty name. For, as belonging to these, that name is empty, since it yields neither light, nor food, nor medicine. Therefore does the Synagogue abide in darkness, even till now, oppressed with hunger and infirmity. And so must she remain without healing or satiety, until she shall acknowledge that it is this my Jesus "Who ruleth Jacob and all the ends of the earth," and until her sons "shall return at evening, and shall suffer hunger like dogs, and shall go round about the city." Those other Jews who bore the name of Jesus were sent on before, as of old the staff preceded the Prophet Eliseus to the corpse of the child of the Sunamitess. Hence, in their case, the name was nothing more than a shadow, for it was not interpreted by their lives. The staff was laid on the body, but produced neither life nor feeling, because it was only a staff. Then He came down Who had sent the staff, and immediately saved His people from their sins, thus deserving that it should be said of Him, "Who is this that also forgiveth sins?" For He is the Same Who said, "I am the salvation of the people." Now there is life, now there is feeling. So it is manifest that this Jesus of ours does not bear an empty name as did His types. There is a feeling of health infused, and the favour is not concealed in silence. Within is the awakening of life,

without the voice of acknowledgment. I feel contrition, I confess my sins, and confession is evidence of life in me, since "Confession * perisheth from the dead as nothing." Behold life and feeling! I am completely resuscitated, my resurrection is perfect. What is the death of the body but the privation of life and feeling? Sin, which is the death of the soul, had left me neither the feeling of compunction nor the voice of confession, and hence I was dead. Then came He Who forgives sins, restoring both life and feeling, and saying to my soul, "I am thy salvation." What wonder that death should yield place where Life enters? Now "with the heart we believe unto justice, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Already the "child gapes," and he "gapes seven times," and he says, "Seven times a day I have given praise to Thee," O Lord. Mark well this number seven, for it is a sacred number, and here is not without its significance. But it is better to postpone this to another day when, not fastidious, but with keen appetites, we shall take our places at a good table, at the invitation of the Bridegroom of the Church, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is over all things, God, blessed for ever. Amen.

* "A mortuo tamquam qui non est periit confessio." It is clear from the context that "confessio" in this place, as often elsewhere in Scripture, means, not confession of sin, but acknowledgment of favour, hence praise. The Saint is, therefore, not so much interpreting, as adapting the verse to his purpose. —(Translator.)

SERMON XVI

On the Mystical Sense of the Number Seven.

"Thy name is as oil poured out."

What, my brethren, is the mystical significance of the number seven occurring in the account of the resuscitation * of the child by Eliseus? I do not believe that any of you is so simple as to suppose it to be without some special design and due, as it were, to chance, that the gaping was sevenfold. Nor do I consider that it was without meaning that the Prophet, lying upon the corpse, contracted himself to the dimensions of the child's body, "and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands." It is the Holy Ghost Who caused all these things to be so done and recorded, for the enlightenment, no doubt, of those human spirits of ours, which are led astray by the treacherous companionship of a corruptible body, and instructed in folly by the foolish wisdom of this world. "For the corruptible body," so we read in Wisdom, "is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things." Consequently, no one ought to be surprised or impatient if I appear to examine curiously these storehouses of the Holy Spirit, so to call such

* "And he (Eliseus) went up and lay upon the child; and he put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he bowed himself upon him . . . and the child gaped seven times and opened his eyes" (4 Kings iv. 34, 35).

mysterious narratives, since I know that "man's life is such, and the life of my spirit in such things as these." Yet I want to tell those who are gifted with a quick intelligence, and who are longing for the end of every sermon almost before they have heard the beginning, that I am a debtor to the dull, also, and indeed to them especially. My purpose is not so much to comment on words as to move and enkindle hearts. I have to draw the spiritual water from the well and to give it to you to drink, which cannot be done by gliding quickly through my subject, but by careful discussion and frequent exhortation. However, the inquiry into the mystical meanings of my present text has detained us longer than even I had anticipated. I was under the impression, I confess, that one discourse would suffice for this, that we could pass quickly through this dark and pathless forest of allegories, and perhaps in one day's journey reach the open plain of moral instructions. But it has happened quite otherwise. Two days have we been wandering in the wood and the exit is still a long way off. The eye, contemplating a landscape from afar, takes in at a glance the tops of the trees and the peaks of the mountains. But the wide extent of the low-lying valleys and the dense tangles of brushwood thickets baffle its penetration. How, for example, could I have foreseen the miracle of Eliseus, until, whilst treating of the vocation of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, it suddenly and unexpectedly crossed my vision? And now that we have stumbled upon it, let us be content to dwell a little on the thoughts it suggests, which will lead us back again to the considerations we are intermitting. For in these thoughts, also, we shall find food for our

souls. In the same manner, huntsmen and their hounds desist occasionally from the pursuit of the quarry they had first started, in order to chase another that springs up in their path.

My brethren, I find solid ground for confidence in the thought that this great Prophet, namely, Christ, "a Man mighty in word and work," descending from the high mountain of heaven, deigned to visit me, "whereas I am but dust and ashes," to compassionate me as I lay in death, to bend over my prostrate form, to contract * and reduce Himself to my diminutive stature, to illumine my blindness with the very light of His Eyes, to cure my dumbness with the kiss of His Mouth, and to strengthen my feeble hands by the touch of His own. I find a sweet consolation in pondering upon these things. They replenish my soul with delight; they enrich my spirit with an abundance of grace; and cause all my bones to break out into praise of my Divine Benefactor. Such a restoration Christ wrought once for all in favour of the whole human race. But each one of us experiences daily in himself a rehearsal of it, when, namely, the light of understanding is imparted to the heart, the word of edification to the mouth, and to the hand the work of justice. For it is He who gives us to think what is

* The Saint refers, of course, to that contraction whereby the Divine Immensity reduced Itself to the littleness of our nature when Christ "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." St. Augustine also sees in the miracle of Eliseus a type and foreshadowing of the Incarnation. According to him, the Prophet's staff, sent on ahead by the servant Giezi, and which proved ineffectual to raise the child, symbolised the rod of Moses, or the Law, incapable of restoring fallen man from the death of sin to the life of grace.—(Translator.)

true, to speak it to advantage, and to reduce it to practice in our lives. Herein we have a cord of triple strand, difficult to break, for delivering souls out of the devil's prison, and drawing them after us up into heaven. And the cord I speak of consists in this, that we conceive right sentiments, express them worthily, and prove the sincerity of our faith by conforming our lives to its teaching. With His own Eyes He has touched mine, adorning with the brilliant luminaries of faith and understanding the forehead, so to speak, of the interior man. He has joined His Mouth to mine, impressing the kiss of peace on the lips of the dead ; for when we were still sinners, dead to justice, He reconciled us to God. He applied His Mouth to mine, again breathing into my face the breath of life, but of a more holy life than the first. By the first He formed me " into a living soul," by the second He reformed me into a quickening spirit. He laid His Hands on mine, by giving me the example of good works, the pattern of obedience. Or certainly in that He " put forth His Hands to strong things," in order to " teach my hands to fight and my fingers to war."

" And the child gaped seven times." For the manifestation of the glory of the miracle, it was enough that he should gape once. The multiplicity therefore, and the reiteration until the mystical number seven was reached, point to a mystery. If you now contemplate the huge body of the whole human race, at first, indeed, you behold it altogether devoid of animation, like the corpse of the child. But when the universal Church has been restored to life by contact with the Prophet Who lay upon her, you will see her opening wide her mouth, gaping, as it were, seven

times. That is to say, "seven times a day" she is accustomed to give praise to God. If you consider yourselves you may know by this that you are living a spiritual life and fulfilling the mystical number, if you subject the fivefold source of sensation to the twofold law of charity, and, according to the Apostle, "yield your members to serve justice, unto sanctification," as before you yielded them "to serve iniquity unto iniquity." Or, otherwise, if you dedicate the same five senses to the work of advancing the salvation of your neighbour, and complete the number seven by adding two exercises relating to God, viz., the praise of His justice and the praise of His mercy.

I have also to speak of seven other "gapings." I mean seven experimental tests, which are absolutely necessary, if we desire to be assured that our souls have recovered true life and health. Four of these tests regard the sense of compunction; the rest are concerned with the voice of confession. If you have life, and voice, and feeling, you have also in yourselves an experience of the seven. You may be certain that your sensibility has been perfectly restored, if you notice that your conscience is pained with a fourfold compunction, comprising a twofold shame and a twofold fear. Added to these four, the three modes of confession, of which I intend to speak later on, make up the mystical sevenfold and give us an assurance of our restoration to life. Does not holy Jeremias, in his Lamentations, observe this number four which, as I have said, belongs to compunction? Do you, then, in your own lamentations, follow the example set by the Prophet. Think of God as your Creator, think of Him as your Benefactor, think of Him as your Father,

think of Him as your Lord. In all these relations, you stand guilty before Him. Lament your offences against Him in regard to each. Let fear be awakened at the thought of the Creator and the Lord ; shame when you call to mind the offended Benefactor and Father. A father surely, for the reason that he is a father, cannot inspire fear. It is peculiar to a father " to compassionate always and to spare." And if he strikes, it is not with the staff of punishment but with the rod of correction. Moreover, he soothes the pain his stroke has produced. Listen to a father's voice, " I will strike and I will heal." In a father, therefore, there is nothing to be afraid of, who, although sometimes administering chastisement as a remedy, can never inflict pain in vengeance. Yet, if the thought of having sinned against my Father in heaven does not inspire me with terror, it ought certainly to fill me with confusion. Freely did He beget me by the word of truth, and not under necessitating impulse, very differently from the father of my flesh. And for one so begotten He spared not even His only Necessarily-Begotten. Thus has He indeed shown Himself a Father to me, but, alas ! I, in my turn, have not behaved as a son towards Him. A son so evil of a Father so good, how shall I dare to lift up my eyes to His Face ? I am ashamed of having by my deeds dishonoured my ancestry. The thought that I have proved myself a degenerate son of a Father so noble overwhelms me with confusion. Let my eyes become as fountains of water ! Let confusion cover my countenance ! Let the blush of shame mantle my face and as a cloud overcast it ! Let " my life be wasted with griet, and my years with sighs ! " Alas ! alas ! what have I gained by those actions of which I am

now so much ashamed? If I have "sown in the flesh of the flesh also shall I reap," but only "corruption." If I have sown in the world "the world passeth away and the concupiscence thereof." What! Have I been so lost to shame, so unhappy, so insane, as to prefer things transient, vain, and next to nothing, "the end whereof is death," to the love and honour of my Eternal Father? I am confounded, I am overwhelmed at hearing the reproach, "If I be a Father where is My honour?"

But quite apart from the claims He has on me as my Father, He has also loaded me with His benefits. He multiplies His witnesses against me in the food He provides for my body, in the prolongation of my days, and, above all, in the Blood of His Beloved Son, Which "crieth from the earth" in my behalf, to say nothing of innumerable other favours. I blush for my ingratitude. And lest anything should be wanting to my confusion, I stand convicted of rendering evil for good, and hatred for love. Yet I have as little to fear from my Benefactor as from my Father. He is the true Benefactor, "Who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not." He does not upbraid me on account of His gifts, for the reason that they are really gifts. The benefits of God are given gratis, not sold at a price, and, as the Apostle tells us, His "gifts are without repentance." But in proportion to my admiration for the divine generosity is the shame I am forced to feel for my own unworthiness. Be confounded, O my soul, be confounded and saddened! For, although it belongs not to a Benefactor to reproach or upbraid, it ill beseems us to be unmindful or ungrateful. Yet, woe is me!

even now, "what shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?"

But should shame be slothful and perform its work imperfectly, let fear be called to its assistance. Let fear be aroused in order to arouse the conscience. Turn away your attention a little, my brethren, from the tender names of Father and Benefactor, and direct it to other titles more severe. For of the Same Who is called "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation," we also read, "The Lord is the God to Whom revenge belongeth," "God is a just Judge," "Who is terrible in His counsels over the sons of men," and "I am the Lord thy God, mighty and jealous." For you He is a Father and a Benefactor; He is Lord and Creator for Himself. Hence the Scripture says, "He hath made all things for Himself." Do you, then, imagine that He Who defends and preserves to us what is ours, will not, sooner or later, show a like zeal for His own? Do you suppose He will not require the honour of His principality? And it is for this reason that "the wicked hath provoked God. For he hath said in his heart, He will not require it." And what is it to say in one's heart, "He will not require," except not to fear His requisition? But He will require, even to the "last farthing." He will require, "and repay them abundantly that act proudly." He will require service from those whom He has redeemed, honour and glory from the creatures of His Hand.

True, the Father overlooks, the Benefactor pardons; but not so the Lord and the Creator. He Who as Father spares His child, will not as Creator spare His creature, will not as Lord have compassion on a wicked servant. Think, my brethren, what a dreadful, what a horrible

thing it is to have despised your Maker and the Creator of all, to have offended the Lord of Majesty! Fear is inspired by majesty, and fear is inspired by lordship, but especially by the Divine Majesty and the Divine Lordship. And if the penalty of death is imposed by human laws upon those who offend against human majesty, what shall be the fate of such as despise the Divine Omnipotence? "He toucheth the mountains and they smoke," and does a little sack of vile dust, which may be scattered in a moment by a single breath beyond the possibility of recall, does such a thing dare to provoke so tremendous a Majesty? He, my brethren, He indeed ought to fill us with dread, "Who, after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell." Ah, it is hell that makes me afraid. I fear the wrathful Countenance of the Judge, which strikes terror even into the angelic spirits. I tremble when I call to mind the anger of the Omnipotent, and the face of His fury, and the crashing of a universe tottering to destruction, and the conflagration of the elements, and the mighty tempest, and the voice of the Archangel, and "the sharp word" of final reprobation. Horror overpowers me at the thought of the fangs of the infernal beast, of the bottomless abyss below, of the "lions roaring, ready for their prey." I shudder with affright whenever I think of the gnawing worm that "dieth not," of the cataracts of fire, of the smoke, of the black enveloping vapours, of the sulphur, of the "storm of winds," and of the "exterior darkness." "Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes," that by weeping over my sins now I may prevent eternal weeping in the future, and escape the gnashing of teeth and the cruel fetters for hands and feet, and

the oppressive weight of chains, galling, cramping, burning, but not consuming? Woe, woe is me, O my mother! Oh, why didst thou bring me forth, to be a child of sorrow and bitterness, of eternal wrath, of everlasting lamentation? Oh, why didst thou take upon thy knees and suckle at thy breast one that is but born to be fuel for the fire, destined for the burning?

He that is thus affected, my brethren, has without doubt recovered his sense of feeling; and in this twofold fear, viz., of God as Creator and as Lord, added to the previously mentioned twofold shame of Him as Father and as Benefactor, he has four of the seven "gapings." The three which remain, he will find in the voice of confession, so that it shall no longer be said of him that "there is neither voice nor feeling." If yet that voice of confession proceeds from a simple, humble, and trustful heart. Therefore, let him confess humbly, sincerely, and trustfully whatever troubles his conscience, and so he will have done what is required of him in this matter. There are some "who are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things." It is of such Isaias speaks where he says, "They have proclaimed abroad their sin as Sodom." But these, as being worldlings, I exclude from further consideration in my present discourse, for what have we to do with those "who are without"?

Yet even amongst persons who wear the religious habit and have made the monastic vows, I have occasionally heard some recounting and shamelessly boasting of the sins of their past. They proudly talk, for instance, of the great courage they gave evidence of in the duels which they fought whilst living in the world; or of their skill in verbal disputations, or of

other such exploits, honourable according to the vanity of the world, but hurtful, pernicious, ruinous to the interests of the soul. Such language betrays a worldly spirit. The humble habit of religion worn by these people, instead of being a sign that they have put on the new man of sanctity, is nothing but a cloak for the old man of sin. Others make mention of the same things as if in sorrow and penitence. But since they aim at self-glorification in their intention, they only deceive themselves, whilst their guilt remains. For "God is not mocked." They have not put off the old man, but they hide him under the new. The old leaven is neither given up nor cast forth by such a confession as this, but rather strengthened, according to the words: "Because I was silent, my bones grew old, whilst I cried out all the day long." I am ashamed to speak of the impudence of some who are brazen enough to boast exultantly of what ought to be expiated with tears of compunctiom, how, even after they were clothed in the sacred livery, they cleverly overreached such a brother; how they outwitted another; how they retaliated on such as injured them by word or deed. That is to say, they make it matter for boasting to have requited evil with evil, reproach with reproach!

There is still another kind of confession which is all the more dangerous in proportion as the vanity concealed in it is the more subtle and difficult to detect. I allude to that in which we have the boldness to reveal our crimes and abominations, not because we are humble, but because we desire to appear so. But to seek the praise of humility is not the virtue, but rather the subversion of humility. The really humble man is anxious not to be acclaimed for his humility, but to

be reputed as vile. He rejoices in contempt, and glories in nothing but in his contempt of praise. What, my brethren, can be more perverse, what more unworthy than that confession of sin, the very guardian of humility, should be pressed into the service of pride, and that you should wish to be reputed saints on account of that precisely which makes you to appear sinners? This is surely a most extraordinary manner of boasting, as if one could not otherwise acquire a reputation for sanctity than by exhibiting himself as a criminal! But as it has only the appearance, not the reality of humility, far from obtaining pardon, it even provokes the divine anger. Did it avail Saul anything to acknowledge his sin, when reproved by Samuel? Doubtless, that confession must have been itself sinful, seeing that it did not merit the forgiveness of sin. For when did the Master of humility, Whose nature inclines Him to grant His grace to the humble, ever reject an humble confession? No, He could not but be appeased, if only the humble sentiments which sounded on the lips were found also to be entertained in the heart. This is the reason why I have said confession must be humble.

But it must also be simple. If evil has been really committed do not be at pains to justify the intention as you may feel tempted to do, inasmuch as this is not visible to the human eye. Do not try to palliate your fault, if you know it to be serious. Neither should you attempt to excuse it on the plea of persuasion by others, since no one can be compelled to do wrong against his will. To justify the intention is rather self-defence than self-accusation, and calls down, instead of appeasing, the anger of heaven. To extenuate one's guilt shows a want of gratitude, because by striving

to lessen your culpability, you detract from the glory of the divine mercy which pardons you. Besides, favours are conferred the less willingly, accordingly as they are observed to be the less thankfully received, as being considered by the recipient the less necessary to him. Consequently, he who depreciates the divine bounty, by endeavouring with words to extenuate his guilt, forfeits thereby the divine forgiveness. Let the example of the first man deter you from transferring to others the responsibility of your transgression. Adam did not deny his fault, yet he did not obtain pardon, and the reason doubtless was because he made mention also of the sin of his wife. That is a familiar way of excusing oneself, namely, when accused yourselves to accuse another. But let holy David tell you how not merely unprofitable, but even pernicious it is to wish to excuse oneself by accusing one's neighbour. "Evil words" he calls "excuses in sins." And he begs and entreats the Lord not to "incline his heart" to them. Nor without reason. For he who excuses his guilt sins against his own soul, rejects the medicine of pardon, and thus with his own mouth deprives himself of spiritual life. What can be more malicious than to take up arms in this way against one's own salvation, and to pierce oneself, so to speak, with one's own sword? "He that is evil to himself, to whom will he be good?"

It is also required that confession should be trustful. This is necessary in order that it may be made in hope, with full confidence of forgiveness, lest otherwise, instead of being justified, you condemn yourselves with your own lips. Judas, who betrayed Our Lord, and Cain, who slew his brother, both confessed, but both without confidence. "I have sinned," said the former,

"in betraying innocent blood." "My iniquity," exclaimed the latter, "is greater than that I may deserve pardon." Truthful confessions both, but unavailing, because untrustful. These three qualities of a good confession, added to the four properties of acceptable compunction, considered just now, will make up the mystical seven.

Now, when you feel such compunction and have so confessed, and consequently are assured of the possession of life, you will also, as I think, admit as certain that the name Jesus is no empty title in Him Who has both the will and the power to work such wonders in you; and that it has not been in vain He Himself followed the staff which He sent on before. His coming has not been in vain, because He came not empty. How, indeed, could He be empty in Whom dwelt the fulness of the Divinity? For to Him the Spirit has not been given in measure. Moreover, it is written that He came in the "fulness of time" to indicate to us that He came not empty. Assuredly He was full Whom the Father "hath anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows." And He was anointed that He might Himself anoint us. All who have deserved to receive of His fulness, have been anointed by Him. Therefore He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me. He hath sent Me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach a release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." He came, as you have just heard, to anoint our sores and to soothe our sorrows. Therefore did He come anointed. Therefore did He come "sweet

and mild, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Him." He knew He was descending to an afflicted race and assumed the character most necessary for their relief. And as there were many infirmities, like a physician of wisdom and foresight, He came provided with many remedies. He brought with Him the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and piety, and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord.

You see, my brethren, what a number of phials full of precious ointments this heavenly Physician prepared for healing the wounds of that poor man "who fell amongst robbers." They are seven in number, designed perhaps for the excitation of the above-mentioned seven "gapings." For the Spirit of life dwelt in these phials. Out of them, certainly, He poured oil upon my wounds. He also poured wine, but less wine than oil. That is to say, He so accommodated His treatment to my infirmities, that mercy should be exalted over justice, just as the oil floats above wine when poured into the same vessel. He brought five vessels of oil as against only two of wine. For it is only fear and fortitude that wine can be understood to symbolise. The other five virtues, namely, wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, and piety, suggest the idea of oil by the sweetness of their flavour. In the Spirit of fortitude, "like a mighty man that hath been surfeited with wine," He descended into hell, "broke in pieces the gates of brass, and burst the bars of iron." In the same Spirit He bound "the strong man," and delivered human souls from the yoke of Satan. But He descended also in the Spirit of fear, not of fear felt by Himself, but of fear to be struck into others.

O Wisdom, powerfully sweet and sweetly powerful! With what healing art in wine and oil dost thou restore the health of my soul! Surely thou "reachest from end to end mightly and disposest all things sweetly," driving far off the enemy and taking care of the weak! "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed." I will sing and praise Thy name, and will say, "Thy name is as oil poured out." Not as *wine* poured out, for wine signifies power and fear, and O Lord, "enter not into judgment with Thy servant"; but as *oil*, since Thou dost "crown me with mercy and compassion." Yes, as oil, which, floating above all liquids, into which it is poured, by this property beautifully typifies the name "which is above all names." O name, exceeding sweet, exceeding savoury! O name, glorious beyond all, chosen out of all, sublime and exalted above all for ever! This is truly the oil that makes "the face of man cheerful," that "fattens the head" of him who fasts, so that he does not feel the oil of the sinner. This is the "new name which the Mouth of the Lord hath named," which was even "called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb." Not alone the Jew, but "whosoever shall call upon this name shall be saved," for to this purpose has it been poured out. This the Father gave to His Son, the Bridegroom of the Church, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XVII

On the Coming and Going of the Spirit and on Satan's envy of the Human Race.

"Thy name is as oil poured out."

Do you think, my brethren, that we have now, in our efforts to fathom the admirable mysteries concealed in our text, "Thy name is as oil poured out," penetrated far enough into the sanctuary of God? Or do you wish that we continue our scrutiny, if aught still remains unexamined, and venture to follow the Spirit even into the Holy of Holies? For this Spirit "searcheth" not alone "the hearts and reins" of men, but also "the deep things of God." Securely may we follow Him, "whithersoever He goeth," in things divine or in things human. Only let us pray Him to guard our hearts and our minds, lest haply we should think Him to be with us when He is away, and mistaking our own spirit for Him, so wander from our course. He comes and goes as He wills, and none can easily know "whence He cometh or whither He goeth." Such ignorance does not, perhaps, involve any risk to our salvation. But inability to recognise His coming and His going would manifestly be attended with the gravest peril. For when we do not observe most carefully these vicissitudes of grace, these advents and withdrawals of the Holy Ghost, designed in His providence for our good, the result is that He is neither desired when absent, nor glorified when present. He

retires from the soul in order to excite us to seek Him the more eagerly. But how can this be, if we are unaware of His departure? Again, He graciously returns to console us. But how is it possible to welcome Him with the honour due to His Majesty, unless His arrival attracts our attention? He, therefore, that is insensible to His going, lies open to the seduction of the enemy. He that observes not His coming can feel no gratitude for the gracious visitation.

Eliseus of old asked a favour of his master, the Prophet Elias, when he perceived that his (Elias's) departure was at hand. But, as you know, he did not obtain his request except on condition that he should see the man of God when the latter was being taken up from him to heaven. This happened to them in figure, and has been recorded for our instruction. The example of Eliseus teaches and admonishes us to watch with solicitude over the work of our salvation, which the Holy Spirit operates within us unceasingly, with the marvellous skill and sweetness of His own divine art. My brethren, let us so attend to this gracious Spirit, Who is our Heavenly Mentor and "teacheth (us) all things" necessary, that He can never be taken away from us, without our knowledge, if we do not wish to be deprived of His double gift.* Let Him never, therefore, at His coming, find us unprepared, but always on the watch, with faces uplifted and hands stretched forth to receive a rich benediction

* This double gift (Duplicatum munus) is apparently the two-fold operation of the Holy Spirit which forms the subject of the following sermon. There is allusion to the "double spirit" promised as a parting gift to Eliseus, if he beheld his master Elias at the moment of his assumption. See 4 Kings xi.—(Translator.)

from the Lord. What kind of souls does He condescend to visit? Such, we are told, as are "like to men who wait for their Lord, when He shall return from the wedding." And surely this Lord never returns empty-handed from that heavenly table which is laden with such an abundance of good things. We must watch, then, we must be on the alert at all times, because we know not at what hour the Spirit will come, nor at what hour He will again take His departure. He goes and He returns; and the soul that kept her feet whilst supported by Him, must of necessity fall, when He withdraws His Hand. But, though falling, she "shall not be bruised, for the Lord putteth His Hand under" her again. Such alternations of fervour and abandonment never cease in those who are spiritual, or rather the Holy Ghost never ceases from "visiting early in the morning, and suddenly proving" those whom He designs to advance in spirituality. "The just man shall fall seven times, and shall rise again." Yet so, if he falls in the day, that is to say, if he sees himself falling and knows that he has fallen, and thus, desiring to rise, may seek the Hand of his Supporter, and say, "O Lord, in Thy favour, Thou gavest strength to my beauty; Thou turnedst away Thy Face from me and I became troubled."

It is one thing, my brethren, to doubt the truth indeliberately, which is inevitable with us when the Spirit ceases to illuminate our souls by His inspirations; but it is quite another thing to embrace voluntarily what is false. This latter misfortune we may avoid by not remaining in ignorance of our own ignorance, so that we also may say, "And if I have been ignorant of anything, my ignorance is with me," viz.,

"is known to me." These, my brethren, are the words of holy Job. Do you not recognise them? Error and doubt are the two evil daughters of an evil mother, ignorance. Error is of the two the more wretched, doubt the more deserving of compassion. The former state is the more pernicious, the latter the more painful. But at the word of the Spirit both disappear, and there succeeds to them not simply truth, but the certain assurance of truth. For the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth, to which error is contrary. He is also the Spirit of wisdom, being the "Brightness of eternal life," "reaching everywhere by reason of His purity" and admitting nothing of the obscurity that belongs to error and ignorance. When He ceases to speak to us, we must be on our guard, if not against distressing doubt, which we cannot avoid, at all events against detestable error. In a state of uncertainty, there is a very wide difference between holding as probable this or that opinion, and rashly asserting what one has no real knowledge of. Therefore, either let the Holy Spirit never cease to commune with us, which, of course, depends entirely on His own good pleasure; or if He is pleased sometimes to remain silent, let Him at least give us warning of this, and so speak to us still by His silence. Otherwise, mistakenly supposing that He continues to lead us, we shall, with fatal security, follow, instead of Him, our own deluding spirit. If, then, it is His good pleasure to leave us sometimes in the perplexity of doubt, let Him not, at any rate, ever abandon us to the deception of error. There are some, my brethren, who say what is false, but sincerely and in good faith, and these, consequently, are not guilty of falsehood. And some there

are who affirm the truth which they know not, and these are really liars. The former do not assert that to be a fact which is not, but simply that they believe what they really do believe, and so they speak the truth; although what they believe is not objectively true. Whereas, the latter, by pretending to be certain when they are not certain, speak falsely even when that which they say happens to be true.*

Having premised this much for the instruction of such as are inexperienced in these matters, I will now follow the Spirit, Who, as I trust, precedes to guide me. Yet I will myself, as far as I can, observe the same precautions which I have recommended to you. I will endeavour to practise what I preach. Otherwise to me also it may be said, "Thou that teachest others, teachest not thyself." Doubtless, it is necessary to distinguish between what is evident and what is uncertain, so that the former may not be called in question, nor the latter boldly maintained. But even for this, we must depend upon the assistance of the Holy Ghost, for our own efforts are insufficient. What man knows, for instance, whether the judgment passed by God upon the case of the Jew and the Gentile, as set forth in an earlier discourse (the third, I think, before

* That is to say, a lie consists essentially in speaking against one's belief—*locutio contra mentem.* Hence it would be a lie to speak as true what one mistakenly supposes to be false, whilst there would be no lie in saying what one sincerely but erroneously believes to be true. A statement is materially (objectively) true or false according as it is or is not in conformity with fact. Formal (subjective) truth or falsity is the conformity or difformity between one's words and one's thoughts. St. Augustine considered that the intention to deceive belongs to the essence of a lie, but this is not generally admitted.—(Translator.)

this) was not preceded by similar judgment, pronounced even in heaven?

My meaning is this. Do you not suppose that Lucifer, who arose in the morning, and with impatient ambition mounted on high—do you not think that he also, before he was cast down into eternal darkness, envied the human race the oil poured out upon it, and in anger began to murmur, saying within himself, "To what purpose is this waste?" I do not claim that this is from the Spirit. But I do assert that it is not contradicted by the Spirit. Hence, as to its truth or falsity, I am simply ignorant. However, what I say is not impossible, and there is no reason why it should seem incredible, namely, that a spiritual creature, full of wisdom, and of surpassing beauty, might have foreknown that men were to be created and advanced to equal glory with himself. But if he did foreknow this, it was doubtless because he read it in the Word of God.* Then, in his malice, he waxed envious, and designed to have as his subjects those whom he scorned to recognise as his equals. "They are weaker than I," he said to himself; "they are of an inferior nature. It is not fitting, therefore, that they should be my fellow-citizens, my compeers in glory." Perchance, that proud ascent of his, and that sitting down in the manner of a master, manifested his wicked design. "I will ascend into heaven," he said, "I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the

* "Sed si praescivit, in Dei Verbo absque dubio vidit." The meaning of this seems to be that it was in the mystery of the Incarnation, foreshown to him, that Lucifer read the predestination of man to a supernatural glory equal to his own. Otherwise, it is not easy to see why the Saint should make special mention of the Word.—(Translator.)

north." Thus he hoped to become like to the Most High; so that, just as the Lord God, seated above the Cherubim, governed the whole angelic creation, he himself, in the same way, throned on high, would rule the race of man. But God forbid that he should have his wish! "He hath devised iniquity on his bed." But let his "iniquity lie to itself." As for us, we will recognise no judge but our Maker. Not the devil, but the Lord "shall judge the world," and "He is our God for ever and ever, He shall rule us for evermore."

Therefore, my brethren, that proud spirit "conceived sorrow," that is, envious rancour, in heaven, and in paradise, where he seduced our first parents, he "brought forth iniquity," the daughter of malice, the mother of death and of misery. And pride is the mother of all. For, although it was "by the envy of the devil that death came into the world," nevertheless it is written that "pride is the beginning of all sin." But "what hath pride profiteth" Lucifer? Nothing at all, for in spite of his malicious designs, "Thou, O Lord, art among us, and Thy name is called upon us." Hence Thy "purchased people," hence "the Church of the redeemed" exclaims, "'Thy name is as oil poured out.' Even when, by sin, I deserve to be cast forth, Thou dost pour this oil of mercy and pardon after me and over me, because 'when Thou art angry Thou wilt remember mercy.'" Nevertheless, Satan has obtained an empire over the sons of pride, being made prince of "this darkness," to the end that even pride itself should subserve the interests of the kingdom of humility. And thus, whilst his one temporal principality of darkness remains to him, such as it is, he is constantly

helping to establish multitudes of the humble on exalted and eternal thrones. Surely a happy dispensation, that the proud oppressor of the humble should be thus unwittingly fashioning everlasting crowns for them, attacking all and conquered by all. For always and everywhere the Lord shall judge His people, "He shall save the children of the poor, and He shall humble the oppressor." Yes, in all places and at all times, He will defend His own, repel their enemies, "and will not leave the rod of sinners upon the lot of the just, that the just may not stretch forth their hands to iniquity." And the time will come when He shall at last, and completely, "destroy the bow and break the arms, and the shield He shall burn with fire." Thou, O most miserable one! hast fixed thy seat in the north, in the region of clouds and cold; and, lo! "the needy" are lifted up "from the dust," and "the poor from the dung-hill," "that they may sit with princes and hold the throne of glory," and that thou mayst grieve the more at beholding the fulfilment of the prophecy, "the poor and the needy shall praise Thy name."

Thanks to Thee, Father of the fatherless, and Defender of the orphans, "a curdled mountain, a fat mountain" has imparted to us its heat. "The heavens dropped (dew) at the presence of the God of Sinai." Oil has been poured out. Thy name has been spread abroad—the name which the enemy enviously begrudged to us, as he did us to it. That name, I say, has been spread abroad, extending even to the hearts and lips of little ones. For "out of the mouth of infants and sucklings" it has "perfected praise." Then, "the sinner shall see and shall be angry." But as his anger is implacable, so shall the fire be inextinguishable

" which is prepared for the devil and his angels." " The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." How Thou lovest me, O my God, my Love! how Thou lovest me! Everywhere Thou art mindful of me! Everywhere Thou are zealous for my salvation, not alone against the pride of men, but even against the pride of exalted angelic spirits! Both in heaven and on earth " Thou, O Lord, dost judge them that wrong me, dost overthrow them that fight against me." Everywhere Thou art my defence! Everywhere Thou art my support! Everywhere Thou dost appear at my right hand! For these things " in my life I will praise the Lord; I will sing to my God as long as I shall be." These are His works of power, these are " His wonders which He hath wrought." That is the first and the greatest of His judgments, which the Virgin Mary, the confidante of His secrets, revealed to me, when she said, " He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble; He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away." " The second " of His judgments " is like unto this," and you have already heard it, viz., " that they who see not may see, and that they who see may become blind." In these two judgments let the poor man console himself, and let him sing, " I remembered, O Lord, Thy judgments of old, and I was comforted."

But we must now return to ourselves and examine our ways. And that we may do this sincerely, let us invoke the Spirit of truth. Let us recall Him out of the deep into which He has led us, that He may deign to guide us back again to ourselves, because without Him we can do nothing. Nor ought we to fear lest He should refuse to condescend to us. Rather we shall

provoke His indignation by attempting anything whatever without His concurrence. For He is not "a spirit that goeth and returneth not," but He leads us forth and back again "from glory to glory" as being "the Spirit of the Lord," sometimes ravishing us unto His own divine light, sometimes tempering His influence upon us, and only "illuminating our darkness," so that, whether raised above ourselves, or left with ourselves, we may always be in light, always walk as "the sons of light." We have now, at length, come forth from the dim forest of allegories. It remains to seek out the moral meanings of our text. Our faith has been confirmed, let our conduct exhibit a corresponding improvement. Our minds have been instructed, let our morals show the result. "Understanding is good for all that do it," for those, namely, who direct their actions and their thoughts to the glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XVIII

On the Two Operations of the Holy Ghost.

"Thy name is as oil poured out."

"Thy name is as oil poured out." What, my brethren, is that fact concerning ourselves, which the Holy Ghost desires to make us certain of by the words of this text? Surely (and it is only since my last discourse it has occurred to me *) He intends thereby to confirm what we know from experience, namely, that His operation in us is twofold. For He not only fortifies us interiorly with virtues, unto our own salvation, but He also adorns us exteriorly with His gifts, unto the salvation of others. The former are bestowed upon us for our own sakes, the latter with a view to our neighbour's advantage. For instance, we obtain faith, hope, and charity for ourselves, as without them

* This seems to be the simplest and most natural rendering of the parenthetical clause—*quod occurrit interim.* It is not contradicted by the reference to the twofold operation in the preceding sermon, since what is said to have been suggested *in the meantime* is not the twofold character of the Spirit's operation, but the connexion of that with the words of the text. St. Bernard sometimes uses the word "interim" to denote the present life, in which sense it is possible to understand it here. The meaning then will be that the experience of the two operations of the Holy Ghost, Infusion and Effusion (the *gratia gratum faciens* and *gratia gratis data* of later theologians), is limited to our earthly existence, which is certainly true. Less warranted both by the words themselves and by the context is the interpretation given by some: "which is next in order."—(Translator.)

salvation is impossible. On the other hand, the word of wisdom and knowledge, the grace of healing, the gift of prophecy, and the like, which are in no sense necessary to the saving of our own souls, are communicated, doubtless, to be employed in promoting the spiritual interests of others. These operations or graces of the Holy Spirit, experienced in ourselves or in others, I will, if you allow me, call Infusion and Effusion, respectively, deriving the names from the ends for which they are bestowed. But of which is it said, "Thy name is as oil poured out"? Manifestly, of Effusion. For if the reference were to Infusion, it would be more proper to say, "Thy name is as oil poured in," than "Thy name is as oil poured out." Besides, it is because of the good odour of the breasts, exteriorly perfumed, that the Spouse exclaims, "Thy name is as oil poured out," attributing the aroma to the name of her Beloved, as to a sweet perfume on her breasts. In the same way, everyone who knows himself to be favoured with the gift of exterior grace, capable of being communicated to others, every such person, I say, may exclaim in wonder and gratitude, "Thy name is as oil poured out."

Yet, with regard to these graces, both interior and exterior, we must be on our guard against two temptations. These are, on the one hand, to give away what we have received for ourselves, and, on the other, to retain for ourselves what has been entrusted to us for the benefit of our neighbours. Certainly, you incur the guilt of keeping what belongs to another, if, whilst full of virtues, and adorned exteriorly with the endowments of wisdom and eloquence, through fear or sloth, or influenced by indiscreet humility, you seal under a useless, I should rather say, criminal silence, the

"good word," which might have subserved the progress of many. Of such we read in Proverbs, "He that hideth up corn shall be cursed among the people." On the contrary, you waste and squander what you should keep for yourselves, when, without waiting for a complete infusion of the Spirit, you are impatient, although not more than half full, to empty yourselves out upon others. Thus you transgress the law which forbids us to plough with the first-born of the cow, or to shear the first-born of the sheep. I mean to say, you deprive yourselves of the life and health which you are communicating to others; because, whilst trying to serve your neighbours without purity of intention, you are but inflating yourselves with the wine of vainglory or inoculating yourselves with the poison of cupidity, or exposing to loss your own lives by fostering the swelling of the deadly aposteme of pride.

Wherefore, my brethren, if you be wise, you will make yourselves to be reservoirs rather than conduits. The difference between a conduit and a reservoir is this, that whereas the former discharges all its waters almost as soon as received, the latter waits until it is full to the brim, and only communicates what is superfluous, what it can give away without loss to itself. Remember that a curse has been pronounced against him who deteriorates the lot which has been transmitted to him.* And lest you should despise my counsel, attend to one who is wiser than I. "A fool," says Solomon, "uttereth all his mind; a wise man deferreth and keepeth it till afterwards." Yet we have

* This seems to be an allusion to the land-laws under which the Hebrews received and retained their lots. See Leviticus xxv.—(Translator.)

in the Church to-day many conduits and but very few reservoirs. So great is the charity of those through whom the celestial streams of knowledge are communicated to us, that they want to give away before they have received. They are more willing to speak than to listen. They are forward to teach what they have not learned. Although unable to govern themselves, they gladly undertake to rule others. For my part, I think that, with regard to one's own salvation, no degree of charity is so necessary as that which Solomon proposes to us, where he says, "Have pity on thy own soul, pleasing God." If I have but a very small stock of oil for my own use, do you consider I ought to give that little away, and keep nothing for myself? But I want all I have for my own anointing, nor will I share it with others, except at the bidding of a prophet, like the widow of Sarepta at the word of Elias. And should some of those "who think of me above that which they see in me, or hear anything of me," persist in demanding a share of my oil, they shall get this answer: "Lest, perhaps, there be not enough for us and for you, go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." But you may tell me, "Charity seeketh not her own." No, indeed, but do you know why? She "seeketh not her own" because, no doubt, nothing of her own is wanting to her, and so needing to be sought. Who seeks for that which he already possesses? Charity is never without "her own," that is, without what is necessary for her own salvation. Not only has she what is requisite in this respect, but she has it in superabundance. She wishes to abound first unto herself, that she may also abound unto others. She keeps a sufficiency for herself, so that she

may be wanting to none. For charity that is not full is not perfect.

But, O my brother, thy salvation has yet to be secured. Thy charity is either non-existent, or so delicate and reed-like that it bends to every blast, gives credit to every spirit, "is carried about with every wind of doctrine." And yet so great is it that, not content with what is of precept, it inclines thee to go beyond and to love thy neighbour even more than thyself; whilst, at the same time, it is so little, that contrary to what is commanded, it dissolves in consolation, faints under fear, loses its peace in sadness, is contracted by greed, distracted by ambition, disquieted by suspicion, disturbed by reproof, tormented with care, inflated with honour, consumed with envy. Then, by what strange madness, I ask, dost thou, perceiving thyself to be such, desire or consent to be the director of others? But hear the counsel given by a cautious and vigilant charity: "Not that others should be eased," writes St. Paul, "and you burthened, but by an equality." "Be not over just." It suffices that thou lovest thy neighbour as thyself, and "by an equality." David prayed, "Let my soul be filled as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips." That is, he wished to receive before communicating. And not only to receive, but even to be replenished, so that his giving might resemble in its easiness rather the eructation of satiety than the yawning which proceeds from an empty stomach. In this manner he observes caution, lest "others should be eased" and he himself "burthened." He also preserved a right intention in imparting his gifts in imitation of Him "of Whose fulness we have all received." Do

thou, likewise, my brother, learn to belch forth of thy fulness, and do not desire to be more generous than God. Let the reservoir imitate its fountain. The fountain sends out no current, and forms no lake until it has first filled itself with its waters. It ought to be no shame to the reservoir that it does not surpass its source in prodigality. Was not the very Well-Spring of life full in Himself and of Himself ere He would, like a brimming fountain, overflow and pour out His divine treasures first into those secluded heavenly regions that lay nearest, viz., the angelic creation, and there "fill all things with good"? Then, having replenished all the loftier and more secret parts, He streamed down upon the earth, and out of His superabundance, "saved men and beasts, according as He hath multiplied His mercy." First, He filled the higher and more interior spaces. Afterwards, overleaping the bounds of heaven, "He hath visited the earth in many mercies," inebriated it with gladness, "and many ways enriched it." Therefore, "go and do thou in like manner." Fill thyself in the first place, and then endeavour to fill others. The charity which combines prudence with generosity is wont to flow in before flowing out. "My son," says Solomon, "do not let slip." And the Apostle, "Therefore ought we more diligently to observe the things which we have heard, lest perhaps we should let them slip." What! Art thou holier than St. Paul, or wiser than Solomon? Otherwise, I do not want to be made rich by thy self-spoliation. And if thou art evil to thyself, to whom wilt thou be good? Help me, if thou canst, out of thy abundance. But if thou hast nothing to spare, then spare thy little for thyself.

But hear now, my brethren, what and how much is

necessary to one's own salvation, what and how much ought to be poured into us before we can safely presume to pour anything out. At present, I must compress this part of my instruction within very narrow limits, for the time has slipped and I shall soon have to finish. The Divine Physician has come to the wounded man, the Holy Spirit to the soul. For where is the soul which has not been transpierced with the devil's sword, even after the remedial virtue of Baptism has healed the wound of original sin? When, therefore, the Holy Spirit approaches the soul which has invoked Him, and which says, "My sores are putrified and corrupted because of my foolishness," what is the first thing to be done? Surely, to cut away any ulcerous growth which may have appeared in the wound, and which would prevent or retard its healing. Hence, let the keen knife of compunction remove the tumour of sinful habit. The pain shall indeed be very sharp. But let it be soothed with the sweet ointment of devotion, which is nothing else than the joy conceived from the hope of pardon. This hope is itself begotten of the experience of the power to control our passions, and of the victory we have gained over sin. Then the soul gives thanks and cries, "Thou hast broken my bonds; I will sacrifice to Thee the sacrifice of praise." Next is applied the medicament of penance, a healing poultice of watchings, fastings, and prayers, and of all other kinds of penitential exercises. But whilst engaged in the labours of penance we must not forget to nourish ourselves with the meat of good works, lest otherwise we faint. And what this meat is the Divine Master tells us in the words, "My meat is to do the will of Him That sent Me." So, let the works of piety,

which are a source of strength, accompany our practices of penance. "Alms," says Tobias, "shall be a great confidence before the Most High God." But meat excites thirst, which has to be slaked. Therefore, we must add to the solid food of good works the drink of prayer, which by moistening this meat of virtuous action shall make it more easy to digest for the stomach of the conscience, and render it more pleasing to the Lord. It is in prayer that we drink the "wine which rejoiceth the heart of man," the wine of the Spirit, which intoxicates the soul with holy love, and banishes from her the memory of sensual delights. This wine irrigates the parched interior of the conscience, facilitates, as already remarked, the digestion of the meat of good works, and distributes the nutriment amongst the members of the soul (if you allow me the expression), confirming faith, fortifying hope, enlivening and regulating charity, and anointing all our actions with the rich unction of grace.

Having thus satisfied her hunger and thirst, what now remains for the sick soul, except to rest and to give herself up to the quiet of contemplation after the painful fatigues of action? But whilst she thus slumbers in the peace of prayer, she sees God, as in a dream. That is to say, she sees Him "through a glass, in a dark manner," and not yet "face to face." Nevertheless, although He is not so much perceived as He is in Himself and immediately, as vaguely felt and apprehended,*

* For a comparison of the mystical with the Beatific Vision of God, see Poulain's *Graces of Prayer*, p. 261, Eng. Trans. The knowledge obtained in both is said to be experimental; yet the difference is not only in degree of clarity but in kind. For it is only in the Beatific Vision that God is revealed as He is in Himself. Theologians are not agreed as to whether this Vision

and that but in a passing way, and by the light of a sudden and momentary blaze of glory, so great a flame of love is enkindled in her by this obscure and transient vision that she exclaims, "My soul hath desired Thee in the night, yea, and my spirit within me." Such a love is full of zeal. Such a love is becoming in the friend of the Bridegroom. Such a love must be possessed by "the faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath appointed over His family." Such a love fills up the soul's capacity ; it waxes hot and boils over. Then may it securely pour itself out, overflowing and overleaping its bounds and crying aloud, "Who is weak and I am not weak ? Who is scandalised and I am not on fire ? " Let him that is such preach the word and make it fructify ; let him multiply signs and wonders ; because there is no room for vanity in the soul where all is charity. For charity is the fulfilling of the heart no less than of the law, if yet it be full in itself. "God is charity," and there is nothing in the world capable of filling a creature made to God's image excepting that alone which is greater than the creature, viz., the charity which is God. Until this has been acquired, no man can be appointed to responsible office without the gravest peril to himself, whatever other virtues he may seem to possess. If one should have all knowledge, if he should distribute all his goods to feed the poor, even should he deliver his body to be burned, still, without charity he is empty. Behold now how much has to be poured into us in

has ever been granted transiently to any saint as a viator. The most probable case seems to be that of St. Paul, when he was rapt up to the third heaven and "heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter."—(Translator.)

order that we may venture to pour out, giving of our plenitude, not of our poverty. Firstly, compunction; secondly, devotion; thirdly, the endurance of penance; fourthly, the exercise of piety; fifthly, the fervour of prayer; sixthly, the quiet of contemplation; seventhly, the fulness of love. "All these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to everyone according" to the operation which I have named Infusion. And He does so in order that the other operation, called Effusion, may be exercised purely (and therefore securely) for the praise and glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth for ever. Amen.

SERMON XIX

On the different Motives on Account of which Christ the Lord is Loved by the various Choirs of Angels.

" Therefore young maidens have loved Thee."

The loving Spouse continues still to speak; still she continues to proclaim the praises of her Beloved. And she appeals for further grace, pointing out that that which she has already received " hath not been void " in her. For listen to her now. " Therefore," she proceeds to say, " young maidens have loved Thee." As if she should affirm, " not in vain, not without fruit has Thy name been poured out, O my Beloved, not in vain has it been poured out and spread abroad on my breast. Therefore young maidens have loved thee exceedingly." Wherefore? On account of Thy name poured out, on account of the breasts perfumed therewith. This it is which excites them to the love of the Bridegroom. This is the cause of their affection for Him. The Spouse receives an infusion of ointment and immediately the " young maidens," who can never be found far from their mother, inhale the pleasant odour; and, filled with its sweetness, they exclaim, " The charity of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Who is given to us." Consequently the Spouse, commending their devotion, says, " This, O my Beloved, this is the fruit of the pouring out of Thy name, that therefore young maidens have loved

Thee. They experience the sweetness of Thy name only when poured out, not having capacity to contain it entire, and hence have they loved Thee. For the pouring out makes Thy name capable of being contained, and irresistibly amiable; yet only for "young maidens." They who are endowed with a greater capacity do not need this pouring out, inasmuch as they can relish Thy name undissolved and entire. Such are the choirs of angels.

The simple Angel, the lowest celestial creature,* contemplates with undazzled eye the profound abyss of the divine judgments. Their sovereign equity ravishes him with delight. It is his glory, besides, that they are executed and promulgated by his own ministry. And therefore he has reason to love Christ the Lord. "Are they not all ministering spirits," writes St. Paul, "sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of

* The number and names of the angelic orders are gathered from various parts of the Old and New Testaments. In no one place are they all mentioned together. We find reference to eight of the nine in the Pauline Epistles (Heb. ix. 5, Rom. viii. 38, Colos. i. 16, 1 Cor. xv. 24, Ephes. i. 21, 1 Thess. iv. 15). The Pseudo-Dionysius, who flourished probably towards the end of the fifth century, is said to have been the first to group the choirs in hierarchies, three choirs to each hierarchy, and to arrange them in the order of dignity now generally accepted: Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Powers, Dominations, Virtues, Thrones, Cherubim, Seraphim. It will be seen that St. Bernard's scheme, which is also that of Popes St. Gregory the Great and Innocent III., differs somewhat from the Dionysian. According to this, next above the Archangels come the Virtues, then the Powers, Principalities and Dominations in order. In the Prefaces of the Mass only eight choirs are mentioned, and in this order: Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominations, Powers, Virtues, Cherubim and Seraphim. As to the distinction between the choirs, St. Thomas teaches that they differ in their natural and supernatural endowments, and consequently in the offices to which they are appointed.—(Translator.)

salvation"? As we must attribute to the Archangels something more excellent than what belongs to the inferior angelic order, I believe that they enjoy the high prerogative of being admitted more familiarly to the counsels of Eternal Wisdom, and that they are commissioned to superintend, with full authority, the execution of the same, each in its proper place and time, which privileges are to them a source of joy ineffable. This is their motive for loving Christ the Lord. Then, there are those blessed spirits named Virtues, so called, perhaps, for the reason that they have been divinely ordained to examine with blissful curiosity and to admire the constant and hidden causes of signs and wonders, and to employ with power all the elements in displaying on earth what prodigies they please and when they please. These, too, discover in their proper function a special reason for loving the "God of Virtues," and for loving Christ Who is the "Virtue of God." For they find the fulness of delight and felicity in contemplating the "uncertain and hidden things of Wisdom" in Wisdom Itself. They also find the fulness of honour and glory in the consciousness that the operations and effects of the causes, concealed in the Divine Word, are exhibited by their own agency to the contemplation and admiration of the inhabitants of the earth.

Next in order come the celestial creatures, known under the name of Powers. These take particular delight in viewing and magnifying the divine omnipotence of the Crucified, which "reacheth from end to end mightily." They are invested with power to beat off and vanquish all opposing powers, whether human or diabolical, in defence of those who have received

"the inheritance of salvation." And have they not herein most ample cause for loving the Lord Jesus? Immediately above the Powers are the Principalities, who, contemplating the Word from a loftier level, recognise clearly that He is the First Principle of all being, and the "First Begotten of every creature," and they are endowed with such dignity and principality, that from the apex, so to speak, of the world where they sit enthroned, they exercise authority throughout the universe, with power to change and regulate kingdoms, principalities, and dignities of every kind, at their sole will and pleasure. They are also empowered to make the first last and the last first, according to the merits of each, to put down the mighty from their seat, and to exalt the humble. And this is the motive of their love for Christ. The Dominations also love the Lord Jesus. Why? Because a praiseworthy kind of presumption leads them to the discovery of certain inconceivably subtle and sublime truths relating to His interminable and irresistible dominion. They marvel to see Him everywhere throughout the universe, not only by His power, but also by His presence, and compelling everything, high and low, the revolution of the seasons, the motions of bodies, the thoughts and emotions of created minds, in the most beautiful order, to submit to the ruling of His most holy Will. And all this He does with so much vigilance that no creature in the whole universe can subtract the least jot or tittle, as the saying is, from its bounden service; and yet, with such ease, that His universal government never causes Him the slightest disquiet or agitation. When, therefore, they, the Dominations, behold the Lord of Sabbath judging all things with such tranquillity, they are

transported out of themselves by an extraordinary but fully conscious stupor of contemplation, infinitely intense and unspeakably blissful, into the limitless ocean of Light Divine. There they seem to withdraw to a most secret recess of imperturbable peace, where they enjoy such calm and quiet, that, whilst they are in repose, all the other celestial creatures appear to unite in their service and in defence of their leisure, out of reverence for their prerogative, and as for true holders of dominion.

God Himself sits upon the Thrones. In my opinion, this choir has greater reason and more numerous motives for loving Christ the Lord than any of those already mentioned. If you enter the palace of an earthly king, amongst the various seats to be seen there, accommodated to various dignities, you will notice the royal throne occupying the place of pre-eminence. You do not neeed to inquire where the monarch is accustomed to sit, for his will be the first seat that attracts your attention, being more elevated and ornate than any of the others. Understand from this that the choir of Thrones surpass all the rest in every kind of spiritual adornment, because it is on them that, by a special favour of amazing condescension, the Divine Majesty has elected to sit. But this sitting may be taken to signify the office of teacher. In that case, I should suppose that Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, Who is our only Master in heaven and on earth, although reaching everywhere by reason of His purity, yet specially and principally illuminates by His presence this hierarchical order, and thence, as from a solemn lecture-hall, He "teacheth men knowledge," and not only men, but the inferior choirs of angels also. For

it is thence He communicates to the lowest angelic choir the knowledge of His judgments, and to the Archangels the understanding of His counsels. It is there the Virtues learn what wonders they are to work, at what time, and in what place. There, in a word, all the other choirs referred to, Powers, Principalities, and Dominations, are told their duties and what honours and privileges they may claim, as belonging to their rank, but above all, they are cautioned, every one of them, that the powers, which have been entrusted to them for advancing the glory of God, must not be employed for the satisfaction of their own wills, or the procuring of their own glory.

But those heavenly spirits called the Cherubim, if they really enjoy the privileges indicated by their name, cannot, as I think receive anything either from or through the inferior choir of Thrones. For to them it is given to drink their fill at the very fountain. The Lord Jesus Himself vouchsafes to introduce them directly into the plenitude of truth, and communicates to them most generously the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" concealed in Himself. Neither do the Thrones impart any illumination to the Seraphim. These are so completely drawn into and absorbed in the furnace of God's love, so inflamed with the fire of divine charity, that they seem to be but one spirit with God; just as ignited gas (*aer*) receives from the flames which kindle it not only their intense heat, but even their colour, and appears to be not so much on fire, as to be fire itself. Therefore, of the two last-mentioned choirs, the former find their chief delight in admiration of the knowledge of God, "of which there is no number," the latter in contemplating His charity which "never falleth away." Hence, they derive their

respective names from that particular grace which seems to be in each order the characteristic and distinguishing endowment. For Cherub signifies "fulness of knowledge," whereas Seraph means "enkindling" or "inflamed." Therefore, the Angels love God on account of the perfect equity of His judgments; the Archangels, on account of the supreme wisdom of His counsels; the Virtues, by reason of His infinite graciousness, which is exhibited in the display of wonders, calculated to bring unbelievers to the faith; the Powers, because of that exercise of His divinely-just omnipotence, whereby He defends and protects the good from the cruelty of the malignant; the Principalities, on account of that eternal and primeval efficacy by which He communicates being and the principle of being to every creature, superior or inferior, spiritual or corporeal, "reaching from end to end mightily"; the Dominations, because of the imperturbable tranquillity of His will, wherewith He rules the universe in the might of His arm, and the more mightily in proportion to that native gentleness and unruffled calm by which He "disposeth all things sweetly"; the Thrones, for the benevolence of His illuminating wisdom, extending itself to all without envy, and for the unction of His grace which "teacheth of all things"; the Cherubim, because "The Lord is a God of all knowledge," Who, knowing what is necessary for the salvation of each, distributes His gifts as He judges expedient, and with prudence and providence, amongst those who rightly pray for them; finally, the Seraphim love Him, because He is charity and "hateth none of the things that He hath made," willing "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth."

Thus all the angelic choirs love according to their several capacities. But the "young maidens," with less understanding, have also less capacity, and are altogether unable to attain to things so high, for they are but "little ones in Christ," requiring to be fed with milk and oil. Hence it is on the breasts of the Spouse that they must find the motives of their love. The Spouse possesses the oil poured out, the perfume of which arouses in the hearts of the "young maidens" a desire to "taste and see how sweet the Lord is." And seeing them inflamed with love, she turns to her Beloved, and says, "Thy name is as oil poured out, therefore, young maidens have loved Thee exceedingly*." What is it, my brethren, to love exceedingly? It is to love greatly, passionately, ardently. Or perhaps in the spiritual sense of the words, the Holy Ghost conveys an indirect reproof to some amongst you who are beginners in the religious life, censuring that indiscreet zeal, or rather that "exceedingly" obstinate imprudence of theirs, which I have so often in vain endeavoured to repress. To such I say, you are unwilling to be content with the common life. You are not satisfied with the regular fasts, with the solemn vigils, with the ordinary observance of discipline, with the clothes and food I provide for you. You prefer what is private to what is common. Why do you thus resume charge of yourselves after having once and for all committed that responsibility to me? For, lo! you have again taken as your superior, in place of me, that self-will, which, as your consciences bear witness, has betrayed

* "Nimis." St. Bernard gives this word as belonging to the text, but it is found in neither the Hebrew, Greek nor Latin Version. Cf. A Lapide, *Comment. in Cantica*, Caput 1. —(Translator.)

you into so many offences against God. By it you are taught not to spare nature, not to listen to reason, not to follow the counsel or the example of the seniors, not to submit to my authority. Are you not aware that "obedience is better than sacrifice"? Have you not read in your Rule * that whatever is done without the sanction and consent of the spiritual father shall be attributed to vainglory and shall merit no reward? Have you not read in the Gospel the example of obedience set by the Boy Jesus for the imitation of all other youths who aspire after holiness? For when He had remained behind in Jerusalem, and declared that it was necessary for Him to be about His Father's business, yet, as His parents would not consent to His staying longer, He did not disdain to follow them to Nazareth, the Master obeying His disciples, God obeying man, the Word, the Wisdom of the Father obeying a poor artisan and his consort! Nor is this all. The inspired narrative goes on to say, "And He was subject to them."

How long will you be wise in your own conceits? God commits and subjects Himself to mortals, and will you still walk in your own ways? You did indeed receive a good spirit, but you have made an ill use of the gift. I am now afraid lest that good spirit should depart from you and one that is wicked succeed, who will strive to deceive you with the outward appearance of virtue, so that having begun in the Spirit you may end in the flesh. Do you not know that the angel of darkness frequently "transformeth himself into an angel of light"? God is Wisdom and

* *Holy Rule of St. Benedict*, ch. xlix., "On the manner of keeping Lent."

wills us to love Him, not alone sweetly, but wisely as well. Hence the Apostle speaks of "your reasonable service." Believe me, if you neglect the knowledge of truth, the spirit of error will have no trouble in misdirecting your zeal. For that cunning enemy can find no more efficacious means of expelling the love of God from your hearts than by causing you to walk in it without caution or reason. Wherefore, I am thinking of proposing to you certain canons of conduct which those who love God may find it worth their while to put in practice. But as to-day's sermon has reached its limits, on the morrow, if God continues to give me life and leisure for preaching, I will attempt to set them forth for your consideration. Then, when our bodies are refreshed by the repose of the night, and (what is more important) our minds duly reinvigorated by the tonic of prayer, we shall come again together for the discourse on divine love, through the favour of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom everlasting honour and glory. Amen.

SERMON XX

On the various Degrees and Characteristics of the Love of Christ

"Whereas young maidens have loved Thee exceedingly."

I will begin, my brethren, with the words of our master, St. Paul: "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." Surely, He is most deserving of my love, from Whom I have existence, life, and understanding. If I be ungrateful for these benefits, I thereby prove myself unworthy of them. Evidently, he is unworthy to live at all, whoever, O Lord Jesus, refuses to live for Thee. Yea, he is already dead! And whoso has no understanding of Thee, is only a fool. And he that desires to exist save only for Thee, is to be esteemed as nothing, for nothing he is indeed. But "what is man" apart from the fact * "that Thou art made known to him"? Thou, O God, hast made all things for Thyself. Hence he must be nothing, as outside this universality of being, who wants to exist for himself and not for Thee. "Fear God and keep His commandments," says Solomon, "for this is all man." But if this is all man, it clearly follows that, without it, all man is nothing. Bend to Thyself, O my God, the insignificant little thing which

* That is to say, the only thing of value in man is his knowledge of God. There is question, of course, of supernatural knowledge of the faith that worketh by charity. In the same sense it is said in Ecclesiastes, "Fear God and keep His commandments for this is all man."—(Translator.)

Thou hast condescended to will I should be. Accept, I beseech Thee, the years that remain of my miserable life; and for those which I have squandered away by evil living, "a contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." "My days have declined like a shadow," and have passed without fruit. But as it is impossible now to recall them, let it content Thee, in Thy gracious mercy, that I recount them to Thee "in the bitterness of my soul." Then, as regards understanding, "before Thee is all my desire," and the intention of my heart. Thou seest that if I possessed any wisdom I would consecrate it to Thee. But, O God, "Thou knowest my foolishness." Still, perhaps it is some wisdom even to acknowledge my foolishness, as I do in truth by Thy grace. Multiply, O Lord, that grace in me, since I am not ungrateful for the little I already possess, but only anxious for that which is still wanting to me. Therefore, in return for the benefits of existence, life, and understanding, I offer Thee all the love I am capable of.

But there is another incentive to love which has still greater power to move, and to arouse, and to inflame me. What makes Thee, O good Jesus, amiable to me above all things is the chalice Thou didst drain for us, the work of our Redemption. This easily attracts to Thee all the love of our hearts. This it is, I say, which most sweetly allures our affectionate devotion, most justly exacts it, most forcibly constrains it, and most powerfully binds it to Thine own Divine Self. For therein the Saviour had to undergo immense labour. As Creator, the making of the whole universe did not cost Him the slightest effort. Of that mighty work we read "He spoke and they were

made; He commanded and they were created." But in order to redeem us, it was necessary for Him to endure contradiction to His words, criticism of His actions, mockery in His sufferings, reproaches at His death. Behold, my brethren, how He loved us! Remember, too, that in this He was not making any return, but only a further advance of love. For "who hath first given to Him, and recompense shall be made to him?" Rather as St. John Evangelist says, "Not as though we had loved God, but because He hath first loved us." Finally, He loved us even before we existed, and, what is more, loved us when we resisted His love. Such is the testimony of St. Paul, where he says, "when we were as yet enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." For otherwise, unless He loved us when we were His enemies, He never could have loved us as His friends; just as we should not have existed at all to be the objects of His love had His love not embraced us when as yet we were non-existent.*

His love for us is sweetly tender, and wise, and strong. It showed itself tender, I say, in that it induced Him to assume our flesh. Its wisdom appeared in His refusing to resemble us in sin. It manifested its strength by leading Him to die for us. Although visiting us in the flesh, He did not love us according to the flesh, but in the prudence of the Spirit. For "Christ the Lord is a Spirit before our face," jealous of us "with the jealousy of God," not, mind you, with the jealousy of man, but "with the jealousy of God," a

* In other words, we owe our Creation as well as our Redemption and Justification to God's antecedent and gratuitous love for us.—(Translator.)

jealousy, therefore, wiser than that which the first Adam entertained with regard to the first Eve. Consequently, those whom He sought in the flesh, He loved in the Spirit, and redeemed in His power. It is assuredly a privilege full of divine sweetness, of inexpressible delight, that man should be permitted to see his Maker in the flesh. But whilst, with divine prudence, He chose for Himself a nature immune from guilt, He also with power equally divine, expelled death from that nature. In assuming flesh He condescended to my infirmity; in avoiding sin He looked to the interests of His own glory; in submitting to death, He made satisfaction to His Father's justice, thus exhibiting Himself as a sweet Friend, a prudent Counsellor, a powerful Helper. Securely may I entrust myself to Him, Who has the good will to save me, and the knowledge of the means to be employed, and the power to put them into execution. After seeking me out, after calling me to Him, think you He will cast me forth now when I am answering His summons? Neither do I fear that any force or fraud whatever shall be able to snatch me out of His hand, for He is the Conqueror of death which had conquered all beside, and, by a holier craft than Satan used, the Circumventor of that old serpent who circumvented the whole world, surpassing the former in power and the latter in wisdom. He took on Him indeed the reality of our flesh, but only the similitude of our sin, thus, at the same time, sweetly bringing consolation to the weak, and prudently laying the snare of deception for the demon.

Moreover, in order to reconcile us to the Father, He underwent and vanquished death by the might of His fortitude, shedding His Blood as the price of our

Redemption. Hence, to sum up, had He not loved me with tender affection, that Divine Majesty would never have sought me in my prison. But to tenderness of love He united wisdom, whereby He deceived the serpent, and to both He added patience, by which He appeased the anger of His offended Father. Such, my brethren, are the characteristics of divine love, which I am under promise to explain, viz., to love with tenderness, with prudence, and with strength. And the better to commend them to your observance, I have begun by drawing your attention to them as they are exhibited in the charity of Christ.

O Christians, learn from Christ how you ought to love Christ. Learn to love Him with a love that is tender, and prudent, and strong. Unless your love of the Lord is tender, you may renounce it under the seductive influence of counter-attractions; unless prudent, you may be misled, and lose it through fraud; unless strong, it will yield to violence. If you wish to avoid being seduced and alienated from Christ, by the glory of this world and the delights of the flesh, you must find in Him Who is the Wisdom of the Father, a relish more alluringly sweet than either of these. If you would not be led astray by the spirit of deceit and error, Christ, Who is truth, must enlighten your minds. And lest you sink and faint under adversity, the same Christ, Who is the Power of God, must strengthen and support you. Let your zeal borrow fervour from charity, light from knowledge, strength from constancy. Let it be ardent, let it be prudent, let it be unconquerable. Let it be equally free from sloth, from temerity, and from timidity. And consider now, if these qualities of love, namely, tenderness,

prudence and constancy, be not prescribed in the Law, where God gives the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength." It appears to me (although perhaps some of you can discover a more reasonable explanation of this threefold distinction) that love of the heart refers to ardour or tenderness in our affection, and love of the soul to the activity or judgment of our reason; whilst love of our strength may possibly relate to constancy or vigour of mind. Therefore, love the Lord with the full and entire affection of your hearts, that is to say, tenderly; love Him with all the vigilance and circumspection of your understanding, and so prudently; love Him with your whole strength, so that you may be ready even to give your lives for His love. Thus we read in a subsequent verse of this Canticle, "for love is strong as death, jealousy as hard as hell." My brethren, let the Lord Jesus be sweet and agreeable to your affections, in order that He may serve you as a countercharm against the dangerously attractive delights of the flesh. Let sweetness be overcome by sweetness, as one nail drives out another. But Jesus must also be the guiding Light of your intellects and the Director of your minds, not only that you may avoid the contemptible frauds * of heretical deception, and preserve the purity of your faith from its cunning impostures, but also to enable you to walk with caution, guarding yourselves against indiscreet and excessive zeal in your conversation. And your love of Him ought, moreover, to possess strength and constancy, neither yielding to fears nor fainting under

* The Henrician and other heresies of St. Bernard's time were but a recrudescence of Manicheism.—(Translator.)

labours. Let us, therefore, love Jesus tenderly, wisely, and strongly, as knowing that the love of the heart, which I describe as tender, is sweet indeed, but liable to seduction if unaccompanied by what I call the love of the soul; just as this, without the love of strength, is prudent certainly, but lacking in vigour.

I will prove to you by evident examples the truth of what I have been saying. When the disciples were grieving at the thought of losing their Master, Who had been speaking to them of His Ascension, He said, "If you love Me you would rejoice because I go to the Father." What! Is it meant that they had no love for Him Whose departure they so bemoaned? No, my brethren, but they loved Him in one way, and in another they did not love Him. I mean, they loved Him tenderly, but not prudently. They loved Him according to the flesh, not according to reason. They loved Him with their whole hearts, yet not with their whole souls. Such love was an obstacle to their perfection. Hence He told them, "It is expedient for you that I go," whereby He censured, not the tenderness, but the imprudence of their affection. On another occasion, when He was speaking of His approaching death, and Peter, out of love, attempted to hold Him back and was making opposition to His purpose, in the reproof, wherewith, as you remember, He checked the Apostle, what else did He condemn but his imprudence? For what means the expression, "Thou savourest not the things that are of God," except this, "thou lovest not wisely, following human affection to the disregard of the divine counsel"? And He called Peter

* The word Satan in the Hebrew means an adversary.—(Translator.)

Satan, because like an adversary,* albeit unwittingly, he was placing obstacles in the way of his own and our salvation, by trying to hinder the Saviour's death. Hence, after this correction, when Christ was again making allusion to the same sad subject of His Passion, the disciple no longer raised any objection, but rather promised to die with Him. But the promise was not fulfilled, because he had not yet attained to that third degree of charity in which we love with our whole strength. He had been taught to love with his whole soul, but his love was still weak. He had received light enough to know his duty but not, as yet, enough spiritual strength to act up to his knowledge. He was not so much in ignorance of the mystery of Redemption as in terror of the pains of martyrdom. Manifestly, that love was not "strong as death," which yielded to the fear of death. But it became so afterwards, when Peter, fortified with virtue from above, according to the promise of Jesus Christ, began to love with so much strength, that, when forbidden by the Jewish Council to preach the holy name, he boldly replied, "we ought to obey God rather than men." Then in truth he loved with all his strength, when he was willing to sacrifice even his life for his love, since "greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." For although he did not then actually lay down his life, he at least exposed it to imminent danger. Therefore, to love with one's whole heart, with one's whole soul, and with all one's strength, is to love with a love that can neither be seduced by pleasure, nor deceived by error, nor overpowered by the violence of any persecution.

And take notice that the love of the heart is, in

some sense, carnal, because it tends to turn the hearts of men towards the Flesh of Christ, and towards His example and precepts, given in the flesh. One that is filled with this love is easily affected by every discourse on such subjects. There is nothing he more willingly hears, more attentively reads, more frequently calls to mind, more affectionately ponders. With this love, as with the fat of the "fatted calf," he enriches his holocausts of prayer. He has before his mind, as he prays, the sacred image of the God-Man, in the manger, or on His mother's breast, or teaching, or dying, or rising from the tomb, or ascending into heaven. Every such representation must necessarily urge his soul to the love of virtue, or help to repress the carnal passions, put temptations to flight, and extinguish evil desires. To my thinking, this appears to have been one of the main reasons why the invisible God willed to appear in visible flesh, and as Man to converse amongst men, that, namely, He might draw all the affections of carnal men, who knew how to love only in a carnal manner, first to a salutary love of His own Flesh, and thence lead them gradually to a more spiritual love of His Divinity.* Was not the former the degree of charity in which they still stood, who said, "Behold we have left all things and followed Thee"? Surely we must admit that it was the love of Christ's sensible presence alone that had led them to leave all things, since they could not listen patiently to a single word about His saving Passion and death before the events, nor after-

* Similar to this is what we find in St. Gregory the Great, homilia 11 in Evangelia: "The kingdom of heaven is likened to earthly objects in order that the soul may be led by means of familiar and sensible things to the knowledge and the love of things spiritual and invisible."—(Translator.)

wards witness even the glory of His Ascension without oppressive sorrow. This is what He Himself meant when He said, "Because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart." Thus, it was as yet only by the power and the grace of His own presence in the flesh that He had withdrawn them from all other love according to the flesh.

Afterwards, however, He pointed out to them a more excellent degree of charity in the words: "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." That degree, as I think, had already been reached by St. Paul, when he wrote, "And if we have known Christ according to the flesh; but now we know Him so no longer." Perhaps the Prophet Jeremias also stood in the same degree, who said, "A Spirit before our face is Christ the Lord." For the words added, "under Thy shadow we shall live amongst the Gentiles," he seems to me to have spoken in the person of beginners, signifying that they who did not yet feel strong enough to bear the heat of the sun, should at least find rest in the shadow. In other words, that they should nourish themselves with the sweetness of the Flesh who are not able as yet to perceive "the things that are of the Spirit of God." The shadow of Christ, I take it, is that Flesh of His which overshadowed even His mother, and by its opacity, as by a veil interposed, tempered for her the burning heat and dazzling splendour of the Spirit. Therefore, in this love of the Flesh let him find, meantime, his consolation who has not yet received the vivifying Spirit, at least in that way in which He was possessed by those who said, "A Spirit before our face is Christ the Lord," and "if we have known Christ according to the flesh, but now we know

Him so no longer." For it is quite certain that only in the Holy Ghost can Christ be loved at all, even according to the flesh, and even with a love less full than the love of the whole heart. Nevertheless, the whole capacity of our hearts ought to be the only measure of this carnal love, whose sweetness should fill them to overflowing, and so wean them away from the love of all other flesh and of the delights of the flesh. For it is thus only that we love with our whole hearts. Otherwise, by preferring any connexions or gratifications of my own flesh to the Flesh of my Lord, and thus failing in the perfect observance of those things which He, whilst still in the flesh, taught me by word and example, I make it clearly manifest that I do not love Him with my whole heart. For my heart being divided, I appear to be giving one part of it to the love of His Flesh, and appropriating the other to the love of my own. Yet He has said, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." In short, therefore, to love Him with our whole hearts is to prefer to all carnal satisfactions, whatever and whencesoever they may be, the love of His most holy Flesh. And with carnal gratifications I include also worldly glory, both because the glory of the world is the glory of the flesh, and because those who take delight in such glory are, without any doubt, carnally minded.

This devotion to Christ's sacred Flesh is, consequently, a gift, and a great gift, of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, I have called it carnal in comparison with that love which has for object not so much the Flesh of the Word as the Word under the aspect of

Wisdom, of Justice, of Truth, of Sanctity, of Piety, of Power, and of the various other Divine Attributes. For Christ rather *is* than *has* all these Perfections, "Who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Justice, and Sanctification, and Redemption." Now, do you think, my brethren, that these two persons are equally and similarly affected towards Him—he who lovingly compassionates the sufferings of Christ, who is easily moved to compunction and other such emotions at the thought of all He endured for us, who feeds his soul with the sweetness of this devotion, and thence derives energy for every salutary, good, and pious exercise; and he who is always inflamed with the zeal for justice, who is everywhere jealous of the interests of truth, who is eager in the pursuit of wisdom, loves sanctity of life and probity of morals, who proclaims by his conduct his dislike of boasting, his horror of detraction, his ignorance of envy, his detestation of pride, his, not only aversion, but even scorn and contempt for vainglory, his utter hatred and intolerance of all manner of uncleanness in himself, and, in a word, his almost natural and instinctive abhorrence of all that is evil and delight in all that is good? Comparing together these kinds of love, does it not appear evident to you that, in relation to the latter, the former is at least in some sense carnal?

A good thing, however, is this carnal love of Christ, enabling us, as it does, to live, not a carnal, but a spiritual life, and to conquer and contemn the world. As it progresses it will become rational, and will have reached its perfection when it changes to spiritual. Love is then rational when, as regards all points of Christian doctrine, it clings with such tenacity to the orthodox faith, that by no counterfeits of truth, by

no heretical or rather diabolical circumvention can it be seduced in the least from the purity of Catholic teaching; and when, in private life, it is so observant of caution as never to transgress the limits of moderation by any extravagance, levity, or the impetuosity of an excessively ardent spirit. This is, as I have already said, loving God with one's whole soul. Should there be added to our love such vigour from the supporting Spirit that no difficulties, no torments, no terrors of death shall avail to turn us aside from the paths of justice, then we shall love with all our "strength," and our love will be spiritual. For the epithet spiritual belongs especially to this love, on account of the fulness of the Spirit which is its prerogative and its distinguishing excellence.

So much must suffice on the words of the Spouse, "Therefore, young maidens have loved Thee exceedingly." With regard to what follows, may the treasures of divine mercy be graciously opened to us, by Him Who is their Custodian, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God for endless ages. Amen.

SERMON XXI

In what manner the Spouse, that is the Church, desires to be drawn to her Beloved.

"Draw me; we will run after Thee to the odour of Thy ointments."

"Draw me; we will run after Thee to the odour of Thy ointments." What? Has the Spouse need to be drawn?—need to be drawn after her Beloved? As if, forsooth, she followed Him reluctantly, and not rather most eagerly! But not everyone that is drawn, is drawn unwillingly. The weak and the ailing, unable of themselves to go to the bath or the banquet, are not displeased at being drawn thither; although, on the other hand, it is doubtless against their will that malefactors are drawn to judgment and punishment. Further, it is evident the Spouse desires to be drawn, since she prays for this. But she would not make such a petition, if, of herself, she were able to follow her Beloved as she wished. But why has she not this power? Are we to say that even the Spouse is infirm? Had one of the "young maidens" confessed herself weak and begged to be drawn, we should not have felt any surprise. But who does not find it hard to believe that the Spouse herself, as if sick and feeble, has really need of being drawn, whereas she seemed to be strong and perfect enough to be able to draw others? What certainty can we have now of the health and strength of any soul, if we admit infirmity even in her, who, by reason of her singular perfection and more excellent

virtue, is honoured with the name of Spouse of Christ? But, perhaps, the Church spoke thus when she beheld her Beloved ascending into heaven, expressing in those words her ardent desire to follow and to be assumed with Him to glory? And yet every soul, without exception, to whatever perfection she may have attained, so long as she groans in the "body of this death," and is kept confined in the prison of this wicked world, burthened with infirmities, tortured with the memory of her sins—every soul, I say, has to submit to the necessity of mounting to the contemplation of things divine by ascents too slow and gradual for the eagerness of her desires. For she does not as yet enjoy the liberty of following the Bridegroom "whithersoever He goeth." Hence that tearful cry of lamentation, "Unhappy man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?" Hence, too, that suppliant prayer, "Bring my soul out of prison." Therefore, let the Spouse also say with tears, "Draw me after Thee," because "the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things." Or, it may be, these are the words in which the Church gives expression to her desire "to be dissolved and to be with Christ." Especially, as she observes, that they, for whose sake it seemed necessary that she should still abide in the flesh, are now progressing favourably in the love of the Bridegroom, and are firmly rooted and grounded in charity. It was to call attention to this, that she premised the words, "Therefore, young maidens have loved Thee." In this sense, then, she seems to say, "Behold the young maidens have loved Thee, and in love are securely united to Thee, and hence, have no longer any

need of me. And as there is now no reason for prolonging my sojourn on earth, draw me after Thee."

This latter I should take to be her meaning, had her prayer been, "Draw me *to* Thee." But because she says "*after* Thee," I am more inclined to think her request is that she may be given the strength to follow the footprints of His, the Bridegroom's, example, and the grace which would enable her to be emulous of His virtues, to direct herself by the rule of His life, and to conform her own to His divine character and disposition. For in this she is especially in want of assistance, in order that she may be able to deny herself, and to take up her cross and so follow Christ. Herein the Spouse has certainly need to be drawn, and to be drawn by none else than by Him Who said, "Without Me you can do nothing." "I know," she seems to avow, "I know that I can by no means attain to Thee, except by walking in Thy footsteps. But even this I am unable to do without Thy help. Therefore, I beg that Thou wouldst draw me after Thee. For 'blessed is the man whose help is from Thee; in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps in the vale of tears,' and is destined, sooner or later, to come to Thee on the mountains of unending bliss." How few are they, O Lord Jesus, who desire to follow Thee! And yet there is none without the wish to attain to Thy presence, since everyone knows that "at Thy Right Hand are delights, even unto the end." Hence it is that all yearn to enjoy Thee, though not all are willing to imitate Thy example. All long for a share in Thy kingdom,* but all are not desirous to participate in

* "Jesus has now many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but few are willing to bear His cross; He has many that are desirous

Thy cross. Such, for instance, was Balaam, who prayed, "Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to them." He wished to resemble the just in their end, but not in their beginnings. So, too, carnal men, who abhor the spiritual life, still would like to die like spiritual persons, knowing how "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." For "when He shall give sleep to His beloved, behold the inheritance of the Lord!" And again, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." On the other hand, according to the Psalmist, "The death of the wicked is very evil." They are at no pains to seek Him Whom they would be glad enough to find. They would wish to overtake without the labour of pursuing. Not so those to whom the Lord said, "And you are they who have continued with Me in My temptations." O sweetest Jesus, happy are they who are accounted worthy of such testimony from Thy divine Lips! They in truth followed after Thee, both with their feet and with their affections. Thou didst make known to them the ways of life, calling them after Thee Who art the Way and the Life. And Thou didst say, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men." Also, "If any man minister to Me, let him follow Me, and where I am, there also shall My minister be." Therefore they could say, as it were, glorying, "Behold, we have left all things, and have followed Thee."

In the same way, then, Thy beloved Spouse, having left all things for Thee, desires to be ever led by Thee,

of comfort, few of tribulation. All desire to rejoice with Him, few to suffer with Him" (*Imitation of Christ*, Bk. II. ch. xi.).—(Translator.)

to be ever walking in Thy footsteps, and to follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. For she knows well that "Thy ways are beautiful ways, and all Thy paths peaceful," and that whoso follows Thee "walketh not in darkness." But she asks to be drawn, because "Thy justice is like the mountains of God," for climbing which her own strength is not sufficient. She prays to be drawn, as being aware that "no one cometh" to Thee unless Thy "Father shall draw him." But whomsoever Thy Father draweth, these Thou Thyself dost also draw; "For the works which the Father doth, these the Son also doth in like manner." And she more boldly begs to be drawn by the Son, as by her own Bridegroom, sent by the Father to meet her on the road, as a Guide and Director, Who should walk before her in the way of moral discipline, should smooth for her the path of virtue, "instruct her as Himself," and give her "a law of life and instruction," and all to the end that "the King might desire her beauty."

"Draw me after Thee; we will run to the odour of Thy ointments." Therefore do I require to be drawn, because the fire of Thy love has grown cold within us, and "before the face of cold" like this we cannot run now, as we did yesterday and the day before. But we shall run again hereafter, when Thou shalt restore to us "the joy of Thy salvation"; when the happy season of grace shall return, when the Sun of Justice shall again grow warm and drive away the clouds of temptation which, for the time being, seem to overcast and to hide from us His Face; when at every gentlest stirring of the more balmy summer air the ointments shall begin to liquify, and the aromatic spices to flow and to give out their fragrant odour. Then

shall we run, we shall run to that odour. We shall run, I say, to the perfume of the ointments, because our present torpor shall have vanished, giving place to devotion, so that we shall no longer require to be drawn; for under the attraction of the odour, we shall run forward of ourselves. But meantime "draw me after Thee; we will run to the odour of Thy ointments." Do you not see, my brethren, that he who walks in the Spirit cannot possibly remain always in the same state, nor always advance with the same facility, and that the way of man is not in his own power, but according as the Spirit, Who remains Master of His graces, is pleased to dispense them with varying degrees of generosity, the soul, at one time more sluggishly, at another with greater alacrity, "forgetting the things that are behind stretcheth (herself) forth to those that are before"? I believe that what you now hear me speaking of exteriorly, you may learn interiorly from the testimony of your conscience.

Therefore, when you perceive yourselves to be affected with languor, sloth, or disgust, do not on that account lose confidence or desist from your application to spiritual things. Rather seek for the supporting hand of the Spirit (after the example of the Spouse) begging Him to draw you, until, aroused by grace from the state of torpor, and rendered more alert and active, you will commence to run again, and to say, "I have run in the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart." Yet, when grace is present, enjoy it in such a way as not to fancy you possess it by hereditary right.* I mean to say, do not be so

* "Therefore, when God gives spiritual consolation receive it with thanksgiving; but know that it is the bounty of God, not

secure of it as if it could never be taken from you. Otherwise, when God withdraws His hand and deprives you of His gift, you will suddenly lose heart and become unduly depressed and discouraged. Do not say in thy "abundance, I shall never be moved," lest you be compelled with tears to say also what follows, "Thou didst turn away Thy Face and I became troubled." Rather be careful, according to the advice of the Wise Man, "In the day of good things to be not unmindful of evils, and in the day of evils, to be not unmindful of good things."

Be not, consequently, too secure in the day of thy strength, but, with the Prophet, cry out to God, "When my strength shall fail me, do not forsake me." And similarly take comfort in the time of temptation, saying with the Spouse, "Draw me after Thee; we will run to the odour of Thy ointments." Thus you shall not lose hope in the evil day, nor foresight in the good. Amidst the prosperities and adversities of this changeful existence, you will exhibit in yourselves an image, so to speak, of the changeless eternity, by this unalterable and imperturbable equanimity of a constant soul, "blessing the Lord at all times," and despite the uncertain events and the certain failures of this mutable life, gradually bringing yourselves to a condition of what I may call fixed and stable immutability; whilst you are, at the same time, beginning to renew and restore in your-

thy merit . . . When comfort shall be taken away from thee, do not presently despair. . . . One said at the time when grace was with him, 'In my abundance I said I shall never be moved'; but when grace was retired, he tells us what he experienced in himself,' Thou hast turned away Thy face from me and I became troubled'" (*Imitation*, Bk. II. ch. ix.; cf. also Bk. III. ch. vii.).—(Translator.)

selves that primordial and glorious likeness to the Eternal God, " in Whom there is no change, nor shadow of vicissitude." For as He is in His eternity so will you be even in this world, invincibly equable, neither cast down in adversity nor elated in prosperity. Herein, I say, the noble rational creature, made to the image and likeness of his Creator, shows that he is retrieving and recovering the dignity of his ancient honour, in that he judges it unworthy of him to be conformed to the fashions of this fleeting world, and rather strives, according to the injunction of St. Paul, to be reformed in the newness of his mind, unto that image, in which, as he knows, he was created. And thus, as is proper, he will force the world, which was made for his sake, by a marvellous reversal of relations, to accommodate itself to him. For having put off the form of corruption and reassumed that which is proper and natural to him, " all things shall now begin to co-operate unto good for him " in whom they shall recognise, as it were, their lord for whose service and enjoyment they were created.

Hence, I believe that what the Only-Begotten said of Himself, viz., that if He were " lifted up from the earth," He would " draw all things " to Himself, can be applied equally well to all His brethren, to those, namely, whom the Father "foreknew and predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son that He might be the First-Begotten amongst many brethren." Therefore, even I shall make bold to say, that " I, if I be lifted from the earth, will draw all things to myself." Do not suppose, my brethren, that I act rashly in appropriating to myself the words of One Whose likeness I have put on. And since this is so, let not the rich of this

world imagine that the brethren of Christ possess only the goods of heaven, because they hear the Master saying, " Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Let it not be thought, I repeat, that heavenly treasures alone are held by these poor, because only such are mentioned in the promise. Earthly things, too, are possessed by them, who, " as having nothing, possess all things." They do not beg for such, as the involuntarily poor, but they own them as lords, and the more truly lords of them the less they desire them. In fact, the whole world, is the treasure of the faithful soul. The whole world I say, because both its goods and its evils are equally her servants and co-operate for her unto good.

The avaricious man, like the beggar, hungers for the riches of earth ; but the spiritual man, as their lord, despises them. The former has to beg for them whilst possessing them ; the latter by despising them, preserves them. Ask one of those who, " with insatiable heart," yearn after temporal lucre, what he thinks of such as sell what they have, and give to the poor, bartering earthly possessions for the kingdom of heaven. Ask him whether or not they do wisely. " Wisely, indeed," he will doubtless answer. But ask why he does not himself do that which he approves : " I cannot," will be his answer. Why ? Because his mistress, avarice, will not suffer him. Because he is not free. Because those things which he appears to possess are not really his own. Because he is not even his own master. Then say to him : If it be thine own, put thy money out at interest, and transform earthly into heavenly treasures. If thou canst not do this, then acknowledge that thou art less

the master than the slave of thy riches, less the owner than the custodian. Thou art even conformed to thy purse as a slave to his mistress; because, just as the slave must rejoice or grieve with his rejoicing or grieving mistress, so dost thou in thy soul swell with elation or shrink under depression, in harmony with the varying bulk of thy money-bags. For thou dost contract with grief according as these contract with expenditure; and art filled with joy or, at any rate, inflated with pride, in proportion as they are replenished with profits. Such is the life of him who makes himself a slave to avarice. But let us, for our part, endeavour rather to emulate the freedom and constancy of the Spouse, who, instructed in all things, "and learned in heart in wisdom," knows how to abound and how to suffer want. When she asks to be drawn, she shows that what is wanting to her is not money but virtue. Again, in consoling herself with the hope of a return of grace, she proves that, though fainting, she has not lost confidence.

She says, therefore, "Draw me after Thee; we will run to the odour of Thy ointments." And what wonder that she requires to be drawn, whilst she runs after a Giant, whilst she is trying to overtake Him Who "leaps in the mountains, Who leaps over the hills"? "His Word," says the Psalmist, "runneth swiftly." She is not able to keep up with Him; she cannot keep pace with One Who "exulteth as a giant to run His course." That is to say, she cannot do this of her own strength, and hence she requests to be drawn. "I am tired, she seems to say, "I am fainting from fatigue. Do not abandon me, but draw me after Thee, lest I begin to 'wander after other lovers' and 'run as at an uncer-

tainty.' Draw me after Thee, since it is better for me that Thou shouldst draw me, even forcibly, either by terrifying me with threats or chastising me with scourges, than, by sparing me, permit me to enjoy a dangerous security in my sloth. Draw me, even against my will, that I may be made willing. Draw me, even in my sluggishness, that I may learn how to run of myself. The time will come when I shall no longer need to be drawn, for we shall run willingly and with all alacrity. I shall not run alone, although alone I ask Thee to draw me. With me shall run the young maidens. We shall run side by side. We shall run together; I to the odour of Thy ointments, they as being stimulated by my example and encouraged by my exhortation. And so we shall all run to the odour of Thy ointments." The Spouse has imitators of herself, just as she is an imitator of Christ. Hence she does not say, "I shall run," but "we shall run."

But the question here arises, when she prays to be drawn, why does she not likewise include the "young maidens" in her petition, and say, "draw us," instead of "draw me"? Or are we to suppose that, whereas the Spouse has need to be drawn, the "young maidens" labour under no such necessity? O Bride of Christ, beautiful, blessed, and blissful, explain to us the meaning of this distinction. "Draw me," thou implorest. But why "me" rather than "us"? Is it that thou dost envy us, the "young maidens," so great a grace? God forbid! For hadst thou desired to follow thy Beloved alone, thou wouldst not have immediately added that the "young maidens" would run with thee. Why, then, dost thou ask to be drawn in the singular, and straightway, speaking in the plural, say

" we will run " ? " Charity," she answers, " so requires. Learn from me by these words that in your spiritual exercises you must hope for a twofold heavenly grace, viz., correction and consolation.* The former is exteriorly administered, the latter visits you interiorly. The one restrains your boldness, the other props up your hope. Correction engenders humility, consolation supports pusillanimity. By the first you are made cautious, by the second devout. The one teaches you the fear of the Lord, the other tempers that fear by an infusion of spiritual delight, as it is written, ' Let my heart rejoice that it may fear Thy name.' Also ' Serve ye the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with trembling.' "

We are drawn, my brethren, when we are exercised by temptations and tribulations. We run, when visited by interior consolations and inspirations, thus inhaling, as it were, the delicious odour of the Bridegroom's ointments. " Therefore," says the Spouse, " whatever seems hard and austere, I keep for myself, as being strong, and whole, and perfect ; and so I say in the singular, ' draw me.' But all that is pleasant and sweet, I share with you who are weak, and hence I add ' we shall run.' Well do I know how tender and delicate these ' young maidens ' are, and how unfitted to endure the force of temptations. And therefore it is that I want them to run with me, but not to be drawn with me. I wish to have them as partakers of my consolation, but not of my labour. Wherefore ? Because they are weak, and I fear lest they should faint, lest they should

* " I am accustomed to visit My elect two manner of ways, viz., by trials and by comforts ; and I read them daily two lessons, one to rebuke their vices, and the other to exhort them to the increase of virtues " (*Imitation*, Bk. III. ch. iii.).—(Translator.)

succumb. Let me, O my Beloved!" she exclaims, "let me be corrected, let me be tried, let me be tempted—'draw me after Thee,' 'for I am ready for scourges,' and able to bear them. But we shall run together. Let only me be drawn, but we shall run together. We shall run, yes, we shall run, but 'to the odour of Thy ointments,' not through confidence in our own merits. It is not in the magnitude of our strength that we hope to run, but in the 'multitude of Thy tender mercies.' For whenever, even in the past, we have run or possessed a good will, it was 'not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God That sheweth mercy.' Only let the same mercy again visit us and we shall run again. Thou as a Giant, and as a Mighty One, runnest in Thy strength. But we shall not run at all unless drawn by the perfume of Thy ointments. Thou dost run in the virtue of that 'oil of gladness' with which the Father 'hath anointed Thee above Thy fellows.' We can only run to the odour of that ointment, for Thou hast the fulness and we but the odour." Now would be the time, my brethren, to discharge the obligation which I remember to have undertaken long since with regard to the ointments of the Bridegroom, but to-day's sermon has already transgressed its limits. Therefore I will postpone to another time the promised exposition, for it would be doing an injury to the dignity and importance of the subject to attempt to compress it within a space of inadequate extent. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the ointments that He would deign "to make pleasing the voluntary offerings of my mouth," in order that I may be able to engrave deeply upon your minds the memory of that abounding sweetness of His, which is treasured up in the Bridegroom of the Church, Christ Jesus Our Lord. Amen.

SERMON XXII

On the Four Ointments of the Bridegroom and the Four Cardinal Virtues.

"Draw me; we will run to the odour of Thy ointments."

If, my brethren, the ointments of the Bride are so exceedingly precious and magnificent, as you learned was the case when I was treating of them, what are the Bridegroom's likely to be! And although I am quite unequal to the task of describing and explaining these in a manner worthy of their intrinsic nobility, nevertheless, the greater excellence of their virtue and the superior efficacy of their grace may be clearly inferred from this single fact, that the sweetness of the odour they exhale causes to run, not alone the "young maidens," but even the Spouse herself. For, as you may have noticed, she does not promise any such effect in the case of her own ointments. She does indeed glory in and boast of their excellence, but she does not pretend that she has been excited to run by them, or that she would be so at a future time. It is only with regard to her Beloved's ointments that that she makes such a claim or promise. And if she can thus be induced to run by the exhilarating influence of so slight a perfume, wafted to her senses from the unction, what would she not do were she to feel the ointment itself poured out upon her? It would surely be strange if she did not fly. But perhaps some of you may feel tempted to say to me, "Have done

with commendations. When thou proceedest to explain to us in what the essence and nature of these ointments consist, it shall then be sufficiently evident what kind their properties are." No, my friends. I can by no means undertake to give you any such explanation. And I must ask you to believe me when I confess that I am not even sure as to whether those things, which I feel suggested to my mind and am going to speak of, are really the ointments of the Bridegroom, or merely the creations of my own fancy. In my opinion, then, the Bridegroom possesses numerous spices and unguents of various kinds. Of these there are some whose fragrance it is given only to the Spouse to enjoy, because of her singular intimacy and familiarity with Him. The perfumes of others reach the "young maidens." Others again diffuse their sweet odours even to those who are far remote and extern, so that "there is none who can hide himself from His heat." But although "the Lord is sweet to all," He is so "especially to those of the household"; and, as I think, the nearer the soul approaches Him by the merit of her life and the purity of her conscience, the fresher are the spices and the sweeter the ointments whose perfume she is permitted to inhale. Furthermore, in such matters the understanding is altogether unable to transcend the bounds of experience. And I am not so rash as to arrogate to myself that which is the prerogative of the Spouse. None but the Bridegroom Himself can tell with what infusions of spiritual delight He ravishes the soul of His best-beloved, with what aromas of sweetness He intoxicates her senses, with what inspirations He wondrously illuminates and refreshes her mind. Let Him have for her as for His

own Bride a private fountain of graces, in which the stranger shall have no share, nor shall the unworthy drink thereof. For it is a "Sealed Fountain," a "Garden Enclosed." Still, the waters flow forth therefrom into all the public ways. These waters, I confess, are always within my reach and at my service, provided no man shows discontent or ingratitude when I draw from the common source for the use of myself and others. Now, with your good leave, I will, after the example of St. Paul, commend "my ministry in this part a little." To me, then, it is certainly something of a weariness and a labour to go forth day by day * to draw from the common streams of Holy Scripture, in order to minister to the wants of all of you, so that each may have at hand a supply of spiritual water for his every need, viz., for cleansing, for drinking, or for preparing his food. For the word of God is the salutary water of wisdom, useful not only for drinking, but also for purifying. Hence the Lord said, "And you are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you." But the same divine word may be employed to cook the crude thoughts and feelings of the carnal mind, using the fire of love kindled by the Holy Spirit, and transforming them in the process into spiritual reflections such as may serve as nourishment for the soul, so that she may exclaim with the Psalmist, "My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall break out."

Those amongst you, my brethren, who by reason of the great purity of their conscience, are able of themselves alone to attain to loftier

* We have here evidence that St. Bernard was in the habit of preaching daily to his community.—(Translator.)

things than I am engaged in treating of, shall certainly encounter no opposition from me. On the contrary, I offer them my sincere congratulations. But I expect that they, on their side, will suffer me to provide simpler fare for souls more simple. Oh, who will grant me that you may all so abound with the light of the Holy Spirit as to be qualified to discharge even the functions of the prophetic office! Would to God the case were so! Then there would be no necessity for me to occupy myself with these instructions. Would to God that this duty had devolved on some other! Or, at any rate—which, indeed, I should much prefer—that none of you stood in need of such instruction, but were "all taught of God," so that I might "be still and see" that the Bridegroom of my soul is none other than my Maker. But now, in the meantime—although I am unable to say it without tears—it is not permitted me to seek after, much less to contemplate "the King in His beauty," "seated upon the Cherubim," "sitting on a throne high and elevated," in that Divine Form in which He was begotten, equal to the Father "before the day-star, in the brightness of the saints," in which the angels desire to behold Him, God with God. Yet, a man myself, I will speak to men of Him as Man, according to the human form wherein, of His exceeding condescension and charity, in order to reveal Himself to us, He made Himself a "little less than the angels," and "hath set His tabernacle in the sun, and He as a Bridegroom coming out of His bridal-chamber." I will speak of Him rather as sweet than as sublime, rather as anointed than elevated. I will speak of Him as anointed by the Spirit and "sent to preach the Gospel to the poor, to

heal the contrite of heart, to preach a release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Leaving, then, to each whatever more sublime and delicate perfumes, so to speak, of grace and sanctity it may have been given him to feel and to enjoy from the Bridegroom's ointments, I shall expend for the common use what I have received from the common source. For the very "Fountain of life," the "Sealed Fountain" issuing forth from the interior of the "Garden Enclosed," through the orifice of St. Paul's mouth, as being truly that wisdom, which, according to the words of holy Job, "is drawn out of secret places"—this Fountain, I say, divides its waters into four streams and through these pours itself out upon the common ways. There it represents to us Him, Who for us has been "made of God Wisdom, and Justice, and Sanctification, and Redemption." These four streams are also four most precious ointments. For there is nothing to prevent the same thing being conceived as both water and ointment, water in so far as it cleanses, ointment inasmuch as it perfumes. From these streams, therefore, which are at the same time odoriferous ointments, produced from celestial elements on the aromatic hills, such an odour of sweetness filled the nostrils of the Church, that, attracted in her members by the sweetness of the fragrance from the four corners of the world, she hastened to her Beloved. as being indeed that "queen of the south" who hurried from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, drawn by the pleasant odour of his fame.

It is clear that the Church was not able to run to the odour of her Solomon, until He, Who from eternity was

the Wisdom of the Father, was made by the Father Wisdom also in time, for her sake, in order that she might enjoy His divine fragrance. So, too, was He made Justice, and Sanctification, and Redemption, all for her, that she might also run to the odours of such ointments, though in Himself the Bridegroom was all these equally from all eternity. For even "in the beginning (He) was the Word." Yet it was only after the announcement of His having been made Flesh that the shepherds came in haste to see Him. They said to each other, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and let us see this Word that is come to pass which the Lord hath made and hath shewed to us." And the Evangelist adds that "they came in haste." Previously, whilst the Word was only with God, they could not move at all. But when the Word, Which was in the beginning, was made Flesh in time, was made Flesh and shown to them by the Lord, then "they came in haste," then they ran. And just as He was the Word in the beginning, but was the Word with God only, and was made Flesh that He might be also the Word with men; in the same way, He was in the beginning Wisdom, and Justice, and Sanctification, and Redemption, yet to the angels only. But that He might be so to men as well He was made all these by the Father, forasmuch as He is a Father. "Who was made," says the Apostle, "for us Wisdom of God." He does not say simply "Who was made Wisdom," but "Who was made *for us* Wisdom." For what He was to the angels already, that He now was made for us.

But some of you may say, "I fail to see how He was Redemption to the angels. For there is nothing anywhere in the Holy Scriptures to show that they

were ever captives to sin or subject to death, so as to be in need of redemption, except indeed those who, by committing the irremediable sin of pride, placed themselves beyond all hope of redemption. Thus, therefore, the angels have never been redeemed, some not needing it, others undeserving of it ; some because they never fell, others because their fall was irrevocable. How, then, canst thou assert that the Lord Jesus has been to them Redemption ? " My answer shall be short. He who lifted up man after his fall, gave to the angel who stood that he should not fall, preserving the latter from the same captivity from which He delivered the former. In this way, then, He was equally Redemption to both, by preventing sin * in the one case, and remitting it in the other. Hence it is evident that Christ the Lord was Redemption to the angels, as He was Justice, and Wisdom, and Sanctification. And, nevertheless, these four things He was visibly made for the sake of men who can clearly see the invisible things of God only as "understood by the things that are made." Thus He was made for us all that He was for the angels. What is that ? It is Wisdom, and Justice, and Sanctification, and Redemption. Wisdom in His preaching, Justice in the remission of sin, Sanctification in His familiar intercourse with sinners, Redemption in His Passion endured for sinners. When, therefore, He was made all these " of God " then the Church perceived His odour, then she began to run.

Contemplate, now, my brethren, this fourfold unction

* In the same way John Duns Scotus showed that our Lady's Immaculate Conception was quite consistent with the universality of Redemption. But the idea of preventive Redemption was no discovery of the Irish Doctor, as some have supposed. The above passage makes that clear.—(Translator.)

Consider the abounding and inexpressible sweetness of Him Whom the Father "hath anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows." Thou wert sitting, O man, in darkness and in the shadow of death by reason of thy ignorance of the truth. Thou wert seated in fetters, bound with the chains of thy sins, and He descended to thee into the prison, not to torture thee, but to rescue thee from the power of darkness. First of all, as the Doctor of truth, He dispelled the clouds of thy ignorance by the light of His own wisdom. Next, by the "justice which is of faith," He loosed the bonds of sin, "justifying the sinner freely." By these two benefits was fulfilled the word of David, "The Lord looseth them that are fettered; the Lord enlighteneth the blind." To these He added the example of His holy life, lived amongst sinners, thus exhibiting to them a model for their imitation, and, as it were, marking out the way whereby they might return to their fatherland. Lastly, to crown the largesses of His piety, He delivered up His Soul to death for them, and from His own Heart produced the price of their redemption and of their reconciliation with the Father. In this way, He plainly appropriated to Himself the verse, "With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him plentiful redemption." Plentiful surely, for not in drops, but in streams, the Precious Blood issued through the Five Wounds of His Sacred Body.

My brethren, what ought He to have done for us, and has not done it? He has enlightened our blindness, He has loosed our bonds, He has brought us back from our wanderings, He has made satisfaction for our sins. Can anyone be unwilling to run gladly and eagerly after Him who delivers us from present errors and over-

looks all those of the past, Who by His life wins for us merits and by His death obtains rewards? What excuse can he have who does not run to the odour of these ointments, unless perchance he be one whom the odour has not reached? But that odour of life has gone out over the whole earth, because "the earth is full of the mercy of the Lord," "and His tender mercies are over all His works." He, therefore, who is not sensible of this vivifying fragrance everywhere diffused, and hence does not run to it, is either corrupt or a corpse. This odour is the good fame of Christ, which spreads itself abroad like a sweet perfume, exciting us to run, leading us to the experience of His unction here, and to the vision of Him as our reward hereafter. All who enjoy that bliss, all who have attained to that crowning vision, cry out exultingly, with one acclaim, "As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts." Yes, O Lord Jesus, we will run after Thee, on account of the sweetness which is proclaimed to be characteristic of Thee, for we are told that Thou dost not spurn the needy nor abhor the guilty. Thou certainly didst not show any abhorrence of the confessing thief, nor of the weeping Magdalen, nor of the suppliant Canaanite, nor of the woman taken in sin, nor of him that sat in the Publican's office, nor of that other Publican who prayed in the temple, nor of the Apostle who denied Thee, nor of Paul, the persecutor of Thy followers, nor even of those who nailed Thee to the cross. Yes, we will run to the odour of such examples, of such ointments! We also inhale the sweet perfume of Thy wisdom from what we have heard, namely, that if any one wants wisdom, he has only to ask it of Thee, and Thou wilt give it to him. For we are told

that Thou givest to all abundantly and upbraidest not. But so great and all-pervading is the odour exhaling from Thy justice that Thou art called, not just, but Justice Itself, and Justifying Justice. And as able as Thou art to justify Thou art equally "bountiful to forgive." Wherefore, whoever feels compunction for his sins, and hungers and thirsts after justice, let him believe in Thee Who justifiest the impious, and thus, justified by faith alone,* he shall have peace with God.

Not alone Thy life, but even Thy conception is most sweetly and abundantly redolent of the fragrance of Thy sanctity. For Thou wert as free from inherited as Thou art from personal guilt. Let those, therefore, who, justified from their sins, desire and determine to pursue after holiness, without which no one shall see God, let such, I say, listen to Thee commanding, "Be ye holy, because I am holy." Let them consider Thy ways and learn of Thee, because Thou art just in all Thy ways and holy in all Thy works. Oh, how many have been induced to run by the most sweet odour of Thy redemption! Ever since Thou wert lifted up from the earth, Thou surely hast been drawing all things to Thyself. Thy sacred Passion is our last refuge, our sole remedy. When wisdom is wanting to us, when justice falls short, when the merits of sanctity fail to secure us, even then we find support and deliverance in Thy Passion. For who can presume on his own wisdom, or justice, or sanctity as sufficient to save him? Hence the Apostle, "not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." Therefore, "when my virtue fails,"

* That is, by "the Faith which worketh through charity," and so includes the practice of all the virtues.—(Translator.)

I shall not lose peace, I shall not lose confidence. "I know what I will do": "I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord." O Lord, enlighten my eyes, "that I may know what is acceptable with Thee at all times." So shall I be wise. "The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember." So shall I be just. "Conduct me, O Lord, in Thy way," and so I shall be holy. Yet, after all, unless Thy Blood makes intercession for me, I shall not be saved. It is because of all these odours that we run after Thee. Grant our petitions and so send us away, because, like the Canaanite woman, "we cry after Thee."

But, my brethren, we do not all run equally to the odour of all the ointments. You may observe some more ardent in the pursuit of wisdom, others more incited to penance by the hope of pardon, others again more drawn to the practice of virtue by the example of the Saviour's life and conversation, still others more inflamed with love by the memory of His Passion. I think I can present you with instances of persons specially attracted in these several ways. They ran to the odour of His Wisdom, who, sent to Him by the Pharisees, reported on their return that "never man spoke as this Man." For, being filled with admiration of His doctrine, they acknowledged the greatness of His Wisdom. To the same odour ran holy Nicodemus who, though he "came to Jesus by night," indeed, yet walked in the resplendent illumination of Divine Wisdom, and returned instructed and enlightened about many things. Mary Magdalen, to whom "many sins were forgiven, because she hath loved much," ran to the odour of His Justice. Just and holy she was in truth, and no longer a sinner,

so as to deserve the reproach of the Pharisee, who knew not that justification and sanctity are the gifts of God, not the works of man; and that he to whom the Lord imputes not sin, is not only just, but blessed as well. Or had this Simon forgotten how Christ, by His touch, had healed instead of contracting the corporeal leprosy of himself or of some other Simon? For the Just One, when touched by the sinner, did not lose, but communicated, His justice; nor did He soil Himself with the filth of sin from which He cleansed the penitent woman. To this odour also ran the Publican, who, after humbly imploring pardon for his sins, "went down to his house justified," as Justice Himself bears witness. To the same ran St. Peter. For after his fall "he wept bitterly," in order to wash away his sin, and recover grace. David, too, ran to this odour, when, by acknowledging and confessing his fault, he deserved to hear from Nathan, "the Lord also hath taken away thy sin." St. Paul testifies of himself that he ran to the odour of Sanctification, when he boasts that he is "an imitator of Christ," saying to his disciples, "Be ye imitators of me, as I also am of Christ." To the same ran all the Apostles, who said, by the mouth of Peter, "Behold we have left all things, and have followed Thee." The desire, that is to say, of following Christ, led them to abandon all else. All men in general are invited to run to this odour by the words of St. John, "He who saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also to walk, even as He walked."

Now, if you wish to know who they are that ran to the odour of Redemption, I tell you, my brethren, that these are all the martyrs. Thus I have set forth for

you the four precious ointments of Wisdom, Justice, Sanctification, and Redemption. Remember their names, and enjoy their odours. But do not ask me about the manner of their composition, nor about the number of spices from which they are produced. For, as regards the ointments of the Bridegroom and the elements thereof, such questions are not so easy to answer as in the case of the unguents and spices of the Spouse, of which I have treated in an earlier sermon. The reason is that in Christ these ointments are without either number or measure ; since " of His Wisdom there is no number " ; and " His Justice is as the mountains of God," as the eternal hills ; and His Sanctity is infinite, and His Redemption ineffable.

This also I must say : Vainly have the wise of this world disputed so much concerning the four cardinal virtues, which they were quite incapable of understanding, since they knew not Him " Who for us was made Wisdom of God " to teach us prudence, and Justice to satisfy for our sins, and Sanctification to give us in His mortified life an example of temperance, and Redemption to exhibit to us in His patiently-suffered death a model of fortitude. But perhaps some one will say to me, " Thy other remarks are well enough, but it hardly seems proper to refer sanctification to the virtue of temperance." To this I reply, first, that temperance and continence are one and the same thing ; secondly, that it is usual in Scripture to put sanctification for continence or purity. Then, what else are those numerous sanctifications prescribed by Moses except so many purifications, or exercises of temperance in food, and drink, and such like ? But above all, hear how familiar it is with the Apostle to

use or to intend the word sanctification in this sense. "This," he says, "is the will of God, your sanctification, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the passion of lust." Again, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness but unto sanctification." Evidently, in these passages sanctification is put for temperance.

Having now, as I hope, placed in light what appeared to be somewhat obscure, I return to the point whence I digressed. To the worldly-wise pagans, therefore, I say, what have you to do with the virtues, who know not Christ, the "Virtue of God"? Where, I ask, will you find real prudence, except in the doctrine of Christ? Where true justice, save from the mercy of Christ? Where true temperance, except in the life of Christ? And where true fortitude, but in the Passion of Christ? Consequently, only they deserve to be called prudent, who are instructed in His doctrine. Only they just, who, of His mercy, have obtained forgiveness of their sins. Only those temperate, who study to imitate the example of His life. And those alone possessed of fortitude who, in adversity, conform with constancy to the model of His patience. It is vain, therefore, for anyone to labour for the acquisition of virtues, if he expects to obtain them otherwise than from Him Who is named the "Lord of Virtues," and Whose doctrine is the seed of prudence; Whose mercy, the source of works of justice; Whose life, the mirror of temperance, and Whose death is the glory and the model of fortitude.

To Him be honour and glory for endless ages. Amen.

SERMON XXIII

On the Mystical Meaning of the Garden, the Storeroom, and the Bedchamber.

"The King hath brought me into His storerooms; we will be glad and rejoice in thee, remembering thy breasts more than wine."

"The King hath brought me into His storerooms." Behold, my brethren, the source of the odour! Behold the goal of the running! The Spouse has already told us that we are to run, and after what odours we are to run; but not till now has she mentioned whither we are to direct our running. Therefore, she now explains that we are to run to the King's storerooms, and under the influence of the odours proceeding thence; for she, with her wonted sagacity, has been the first to detect the fragrance and is eager for admission to its source, so that she may enjoy the fulness thereof. But what are we to understand by these storerooms? For the present let us consider them as the Bridegroom's sweet-smelling promptuaries, so to speak, filled with odoriferous fruits of the soil, replenished with all manner of delights. It is in storehouses of this kind that all the more precious produce of the field and the garden are hoarded up and preserved. Here, then, is the goal of the running. But who are they that run? They are souls that are fervent in spirit. The Spouse runs, and so do the "young maidens." But the former runs more swiftly because she loves more ardently, and so reaches her destination more speedily. On her arrival, far from

meeting with a repulse, she is not even kept waiting. The door is opened to her without delay, as to one of the household, as to one most tenderly and especially beloved, and most warmly welcomed. But what about the "young maidens"? They are following indeed, but far behind. For, being as yet weak, they cannot keep pace with the devotion of the Spouse, nor emulate her desire and her fervour. Therefore, they arrive later and remain outside. But the charity of the Spouse is not at rest nor, as commonly happens, is she so elated with her good fortune as to forget them. Rather she consoles them and encourages them to bear with patience and equanimity both their disappointment and their separation from herself. She also tells them of the happiness she enjoys, for no other reason than that they may rejoice with her, because they feel firmly persuaded that, whatever graces and favours are bestowed upon their mother, they have a right to regard as in some sense their own. For she is not so intent upon her own advancement as to neglect the care of them, nor does she wish to procure any advantage to herself or to her private interests at their expense. Therefore, no matter how high above them the superiority of her merits raises her, she will most certainly feel obliged, through her charity and tender solicitude, to remain always with them. For it behoves her to emulate the example of her Beloved. And as He, whilst ascending to heaven, promised nevertheless to abide on earth with His disciples, even to the consummation of the world, so should she also combine a care for others with zeal for her own spiritual progress. Hence, whatever her distance from them, however far advanced beyond them, she can never lay aside her

care, and her solicitude, and her affection for those whom she has brought forth in the Gospel; she can never forget her own flesh and blood.

She says to them, therefore, "Rejoice and have confidence. The King hath brought me into His storerooms. Consider yourselves introduced likewise. I, indeed, appear to be the only one brought in, but I am not the only one deriving benefit therefrom. For every advantage to me belongs equally to all of you. It is for you I advance, and amongst you I will share whatever beyond you I may chance to merit." Do you wish, my brethren, to know for certain that she spoke to them in this sense and with such loving affection? Then, listen to their reply: "We will be glad and rejoice in thee." "In thee," they say, "we will be glad and rejoice, since we have not yet deserved to experience such emotions in ourselves." And they immediately add, "remembering thy breasts." As if they should say, "Yes, we will patiently await thy coming, knowing that thou wilt return to us with full breasts. Then we hope to be glad and to rejoice; meanwhile we console ourselves with the memory of thy breasts." The words added, "more than wine," indicate that, by reason of their imperfection, they still relish the memory of carnal delights, yet acknowledge that the desire of these has been overcome by the abundant sweetness, which, as they know by experience, issues forth from the breasts of the Spouse. I should now discourse at length on these breasts, only that I recollect having treated of them sufficiently in a previous sermon. But see now how the young maidens presume with their mother, and how they reckon as their own her joys and her gains, and generously console themselves for their

disappointment in not obtaining admittance by the thought of her success. Certainly, they could not be so bold with her, did they not recognise in her a mother. Attend to this, ye prelates, who are always ready to inspire your flocks with fear, but seldom to do them a service. "Receive instruction, ye that judge the earth." Learn how you ought to be the mothers rather than the masters of these committed to your care. Study, therefore, to make yourselves more loved than feared; and if, sometimes, there is need of severity, let it be the severity of a parent, not that of a tyrant. Show yourselves to be mothers in love and fathers in correction. Cultivate meekness, restrain your anger, put away the scourge of discipline and offer instead the breasts of affection. And let these breasts be enlarged with an abundance of milk, not dilated by the force of passion. Why do you lay your heavy yoke upon the people whose burdens it is rather your duty to bear? Why is it that the little one, bitten by the infernal serpent, avoids manifesting his condition to the priest, to whom he ought to run with more eagerness than to his mother's breast? If you be spiritual persons, instruct such in the spirit of mildness, each looking to himself, "lest he also be tempted." Otherwise, he "shall die in his iniquity," says the Lord, "but I will require his blood at thy hand." But of this later.

Now we have to try and discover what is the spiritual signification of these storerooms, as the literal sense of the text is manifest enough from the foregoing observations. In the following verses, there is mention of a garden and of a bedchamber. I intend to treat of both of these in my present discourse, in connexion with the storerooms. For, by considering them together,

we shall be able to make each of the three throw light on the others. And first, if you please, we shall seek in the Holy Scriptures for these three things, viz., a garden, a storeroom, and a bedchamber. For the soul that thirsts after God gladly rests and lingers in His inspired word, knowing that therein, without any doubt, she shall find Him for Whose company she yearns. Let the garden, then, symbolise the simple plain, historic sense. Let the storeroom represent the moral signification, and let the bedchamber typify the secret meaning only revealed to divine contemplation.

Not without reason, as I think, is the historic sense compared to a garden, because in it we find men of virtue, like to fruit-trees in the garden of the Bridegroom, in the paradise of God, from whose virtuous actions and holy lives we may gather the fruits of good examples. Does any one doubt that the good man is a tree planted by the hand of God? If so, let him listen to David, "And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season, and his leaf shall not fall off." Hear Jeremias singing in concert, in the same Spirit, and almost in the same words, "And he shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters, that spreadeth out its roots towards the moisture, and it shall not fear when the heat cometh." Again the Psalmist, "The just shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow up like the cedar of Libanus." And again of himself, "But I (am) as a fruitful olive-tree in the house of God." The Scripture history, then, is a garden, and contains three divisions. In it are comprised the Creation of heaven and earth, the Reconciliation, and the Restoration. Creation may be considered as the sowing,

or the planting of the garden, and Reconciliation as the growth of what has been sown or planted. For in the fulness of time, when the heavens dropped down dew from above and the clouds rained down the Just, the earth opened and budded forth the Saviour, by Whom was effected the Reconciliation of heaven and earth. "For He is our peace, Who hath made both one," "making peace through the Blood of His cross, both as to the things on earth, and the things that are in heaven." The Restoration is reserved until the end of the world. For then there shall be a "new heaven and a new earth," and the good shall be collected from out the midst of the wicked, as fruit from the garden, to be laid up in the divine storehouses. "In that day," so Isaias, "the bud of the Lord shall be in magnificence and glory, and the fruit of the earth shall be high." You have, consequently, three distinct departments in this garden of the historic sense.

In the moral signification, likewise, three things have to be noticed, as it were three cellars in the same storehouse. And perhaps this is the reason why we have "storerooms" in the plural, rather than "storeroom," to indicate, namely, the number of cellars. Hence, later on, we shall hear the Spouse boasting of the fact that she has been brought into the wine-cellar. We are told in Proverbs, "Give occasion to a wise man, and wisdom shall be added to him." Therefore, as the Holy Spirit has given the occasion in the name which it has pleased Him to impose on this cellar, let us not hesitate to give names to the other two also, calling one the cellar of spices and the other the cellar of unguents. The reason of such appellations I will explain afterwards. Observe, meantime, how everything about the

Bridegroom is sweet and health-giving : wine, and ointments, and spices. "Wine," as the Scriptures bear witness, "rejoiceth the heart of man." We read also that he "maketh his face cheerful with oil," which oil has been mixed, no doubt, with odoriferous elements, so as to make of it an ointment. The aromatic spices are not only prized for the sweetness of their fragrance, but also for their medicinal properties. Good reason, therefore, had the Spouse for boasting of her admission into those cellars which are filled with such abounding treasures of grace.

But I have other names besides for these three cellars, which, it seems to me, are even more evidently applicable than those I have just explained. To proceed in due order, I call the first cellar Discipline, the second Nature, and the third Grace. In the first we learn, according to the rules of sound morality, how to be subject to others ; in the second, how to be equal, in the third, how to be superior. In plainer words, we learn how to live under others, how to live on terms of equality with others, and how to rule over others. Or again, we are taught in the first the duties of subjection ; in the second, the duties of equality ; and in the third, the duties of superiority. Therefore, Discipline teaches us how to be disciples, nature how to be equals, and Grace how to be superiors. By nature, indeed, all men were made equal.* But their natural perfection

* "Omnes homines natura aequales genuit." That is to say, all men are equal specifically and in the abstract, as equally participating in the same human nature, and all enjoy equal specific rights. But in the concrete—to quote Dr. Ryan— 'men's natural rights are unequal, just as are the concrete natures from which they spring . . . men are equal as regards the number of their natural rights. The most important of these are the right

having been corrupted by pride, they grew impatient of this original equality, endeavoured to rise each above the other, and desired to surpass each other, led on by the love of vainglory to mutual envy and jealousy. In the first place, therefore, and in the first cellar, the wantonness of our manners and characters must be kept in restraint by the yoke of discipline, until the will, its obstinacy having been worn away, as it were, by the friction of the hard and long-pressing precepts of our superiors, shall thus be humbled and healed, and recover that natural integrity which it lost through pride. Then, when we have learned to live peaceably and sociably, as far as it depends upon us, with all who share our common nature, namely, with all men, and that not through fear of correction, but solely from a sentiment of natural affection—then, I say, we shall pass from the cellar called Discipline into that of Nature. Here we shall experience the truth of what is written, "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, like precious ointment on the head!" For to disciplined morals, as to sweet spices pounded together, there is added now the oil of gladness, that is to say, the perfection of our nature is

to life, to liberty, to livelihood, to property, to marriage, to religious worship, to moral and intellectual education. These inhere in all men, without distinction," but have not necessarily the same extension or content in all, such extension being determined by the special circumstances of each individual. This is the sense in which we must interpret the above-quoted sentence of St. Bernard, unless we wish to regard him as the precursor of Hobbes, Rousseau, Paine, and the present-day prophets of anarchy and socialism, who maintain the absolute equality of all men, and, whether by accident or otherwise, have selected his very words to epitomise their doctrines. The same words have also found their way into the American "Declaration of Independence." Cf. Hickey, *Ethica*, p. 200.—(Translator.)

restored, and the result is an ointment exceedingly "good and pleasant."

This unguent renders a man sweet and mild, makes him such that he never complains, never overreaches, never strikes or otherwise injures anybody, never boasts or prefers himself to anyone and, moreover, he enters gladly into the kindly intercourse of friendship which consists in the interchange of all good offices.

If you have well understood the properties of these two cellars, I think you must admit that not altogether fanciful are the names I have given them, calling the first the cellar of spices, and the second the cellar of unguents. For, just as the violent pounding of the pestle presses and squeezes out the essence and fragrance of the aromatic elements, so does the force of authority and the pressure of discipline in the cellar of spices beat out and extract, so to speak, the natural excellence of good morals. In the cellar of unguents flows that pleasing and spontaneously obliging sweetness of a free and, as it were, instinctive affection, like the ointment on the head, which, at the slightest touch of heat, trickles down and spreads itself over the whole body. Hence, the aromatic elements are contained in the cellar of Discipline, but as yet dry and uncompounded; and this is my reason for naming it the cellar of spices. In the second cellar, which I have called Nature, the confected ointments are stored up and preserved; to this fact it owes its name of the cellar of unguents. And I think the third has been called the wine-cellar, for no other reason than because it contains the wine of zeal, fervescent with charity. He who has not yet deserved to be introduced into this, ought not by any means to undertake the government

of others. For every ruler should be aglow with this wine, as was the Doctor of Nations when he exclaimed, "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is scandalised and I am not on fire?" Otherwise, you act very wickedly in seeking to govern those whom you feel no desire to benefit; and by insisting too ambitiously on the submission to your authority of men for whose salvation you have no concern. To this cellar I have given the second name of the cellar of Grace, not indeed as if even the other two can be attained without grace, but because of the plenitude of all graces, which is received in this alone. For "Charity is the fulfilling of the law." And it is also written that "he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law."

You now understand, my brethren, the signification of the names. Let us consider next the difference between the cellars. For it is a truth of experience that we do not possess the same ease and capacity for living at peace with our companions, united in the bonds of spontaneous affection, and for repressing with the fear of the master, and restraining with the sharp curb of discipline, the petulance and inconstancy of the senses, and the inordinate desires of the flesh. It is one thing to live a well-ordered life under the government of a watchful superior, and quite another to exercise charity habitually in our dealings with our brethren, solely in obedience to the promptings of our own wills. And surely no one would say that it is a matter of equal merit and of equal virtue to live in peace and harmony with our equals, and to govern wisely and with advantage to the governed. How many there are who lead a quiet life under the eye of a superior, yet whom, if released from the yoke of subjection, you would find

incapable of repose, incapable even of keeping themselves from doing harm to their brethren! How many also do you behold conversing with their equals sincerely and without offence, who, if raised to the rank of superior, would show themselves to be not only useless, but devoid of good sense, and even wanting in probity! Persons of this description have in their own place all that they require, and so should find contentment in that mediocrity of goodness which God has bestowed upon them as their measure of grace. They do not indeed any longer need the watchful supervision of a master, but neither are they qualified to act as the masters of others. Hence, they surpass in moral excellence those who belong to the first class or cellar, and are still subject to discipline, but they are themselves surpassed by those of the third class, by those, that is, who possess the qualities requisite in a superior. Such as these, who know how to govern well and wisely, have received the promise that they shall be set over all the goods of their Lord. It is indeed a fact that there are but few who can govern with advantage to their subjects, and fewer still who can govern with humility. Nevertheless, that superior shall easily fulfil these two conditions of good government, ruling with profit to his inferiors without spiritual loss to himself, that superior, I say, who, after perfectly acquiring the virtue which is mother of all the others, that is, the virtue of discretion, is furthermore inebriated with the wine of charity, to the extent of despising his own glory, and forgetting himself and his personal interests.

It is only in the wine-cellar this wine can be obtained, and only under the admirable direction of the Holy Ghost. Without the fervour of charity, discretion

is unfruitful and sluggish ; whilst, unless tempered with discretion, the impetuosity of fervour easily induces precipitation. Worthy of admiration, therefore, is he to whom neither of these virtues is wanting, so that discretion is enlivened by fervour, and fervour held in check by discretion. Such, my brethren, is the character which superiors ought to possess. In my opinion, he has completely attained to the perfection both of morals and of discipline, to whomsoever it has been granted to pass through and around all these cellars without hindrance. I mean, he who in no particular either resists his superiors, or envies his equals ; who governs without pride and without neglect of his subjects ; who is obedient to those over him, condescending and useful to those under him, and agreeable to his equals. The glory of such perfection I have not the slightest hesitation in attributing to the Spouse. Nay, she even implicitly claims it for herself, when she boasts that "The King hath brought me into His storerooms." For here she does not assert that she has been introduced into this or that particular storeroom ; but simply says, speaking in the plural, "into His storerooms," which must be taken to mean all.

Let us come now to the bedchamber. What does it symbolise ? And am I so presumptuous as to imagine I can comprehend its meaning ? Far be it from me to make pretensions to so sublime an experience, or to boast of a prerogative which belongs exclusively to the happy Spouse. According to the counsel of the Greek *

* Socrates is said to have summed up his teaching in the two words, "γνῶθι σεαυτὸν" (know thyself), all wisdom consisting in self-knowledge. This celebrated precept has been attributed to each of the Seven Sages, and even to Apollo's own daughter, the mythical Phemonoe, for which reason it was inscribed over

philosopher, I take care to know myself, that, with the Prophet, "I may also know what is wanting to me." And yet if I knew nothing about the bedchamber, I surely could say nothing. What knowledge I have, I will not begrudge nor withhold from you. And as to that whereof I am ignorant, may He instruct you "Who teacheth knowledge to man." I have observed, if you recollect, that it is in the privacy of loving contemplation we must look for the King's bedchamber. And in speaking of the ointments, I remember to have said that the Bridegroom possesses many and various unguents, and that all these are not equally accessible to all, but his own to each, according to the diversity of merits. In the same way, I think that the King has not one but several bedchambers. For certainly there are more than one queen, there are many wives (*concubinæ*) and an innumerable throng of young maidens. Each of these has her own place for private intercourse with the Bridegroom, and says, "my secret to myself, my secret to myself." Not all are permitted to enjoy in the same chamber the delightful and secret presence of the Beloved, but each in that only which has been prepared for her by the Father. For it is not we that have chosen Him, but He hath first chosen us and appointed us our several places. And wheresoever each has been put by Him, there he ought to remain. Thus, to one contrite woman was given a place at the Feet of the Lord Jesus. Another, if indeed another and not the same, enjoyed the fruit of her devotion at His Head. St. Thomas obtained the grace

the portico of Apollo's temple at Delphi. The reader will recall St. Augustine's beautiful prayer, "Let me know Thee, my God, let me know myself" (noverim Te, noverim me).—(Translator.)

of this secret in the Saviour's Side, St. John on His Breast, St. Peter in the Father's Bosom, St. Paul in the third heaven.

Which of us, my brethren, is competent to distinguish accurately these varieties of merits, or rather of rewards? Lest, however, we should seem to have passed over that which we do know, I say that the first woman sought her repose in the security of humility, the second in the seat of hope, St. Thomas in the solidity of faith, St. John in the breadth of charity, St. Paul in the profundity of wisdom, St. Peter in the light of truth. Thus, therefore, has the Bridegroom many mansions, and every soul, whether a queen, or a wife, or one of the young maidens, obtains there the place and the limit proportionate to her merits, until it be permitted her to ascend higher by contemplation, to enter into the joy of her Lord, and to search out all the delightful secrets of her Beloved. This I will endeavour to explain more clearly in its proper place, according as the Spirit shall condescend to inspire me. Meantime, let it suffice us to know that none of the young maidens, none of the wives, none even of the queens, can have any access to that secret bedchamber, which, alone of its kind, the Bridegroom has reserved to His "beautiful dove," His "perfect one." Hence, I have no reason to complain of not being admitted thither, especially since I know that the Spouse herself cannot, as yet, attain to every secret she would wish to discover. For she demands to be informed "where He feedeth, where He lieth in the mid-day."

But let me tell you what I have attained to, or rather what I believe myself to have attained to. And you must not regard as a boast this communication, which

I make only for your good. There is in the home of the Bridegroom a certain place where, as Governor of the universe, He frames His decrees, and disposes His counsels, appointing to all creatures their laws, their weight, measure, and number. It is a lofty place and a secret, but very far from quiet. For although, as far as depends on Him, He "disposeth all things sweetly," still He does really dispose. And He will not suffer the contemplative soul which, perchance, has found her way to this place, to rest there peacefully, but by causing her to scrutinise everything with admiration, He wearies and disquiets her in ways no less pleasant than marvellous. In a following verse, the Spouse beautifully expresses these two characteristics of such contemplation, viz., delight and restlessness, where she confesses that whilst she sleeps her heart watches. For she thus signifies that, although she enjoys rest in this sleep of a most blissful transport and tranquil admiration, she nevertheless endures fatigue in the watching of her unquiet curiosity and in her painful activity. Hence blessed Job said: "If I be down to sleep, I shall say, when shall I rise? And again I shall look for the evening."

Do you not perceive, my brethren, from these words, that sometimes the holy soul wishes to decline such bitter-sweets, if I may use the expression, and again experiences a revival of appetite for the same sweet-bitters? * For had that slumber of contemplation completely satisfied her, she never would have asked, "When shall I rise?" And, on the contrary, she

* "Molesta suavitas . . . suavis molestia." Compare with this what St. Teresa says about the "Wound of Love" or the "Anguish of Love," *Int. Castle*, 6th Mans., ch. raxi.—(Tnslator.)

never would have looked forward to the hour of restful prayer, viz., to the evening, were it entirely distasteful. No bedchamber of the King, therefore, can this place be, since the soul therein is not permitted to enjoy perfect repose.

There is another place, whence is kept an immutable watch over the reprobate rational creatures, by the just vengeance, as severe as it is secret, of the most righteous Judge, "terrible in His counsels over the sons of men." Here the trembling soul beholds the Almighty, by a just but hidden judgment, refusing both to pardon the evil and to accept the good works of the wicked,* and, moreover, hardening their hearts, lest perchance they should become contrite, enter into themselves, be converted, and He should heal them.

* The Saint is evidently speaking of obstinately impenitent sinners, for no Christian would say, least of all St. Bernard, that pardon is ever refused to the truly contrite. He is, therefore, but repeating here what he said in the first of these sermons, that without the keeping of the commandments no work is good or acceptable. It would also be a great mistake to conclude from what is here said that the holy Preacher held any theory of absolute predestination, according to which God has from all eternity immutably determined the number of the elect, independently of His prevision of merit or demerit. Such a doctrine would be in manifest contradiction with his plain teaching elsewhere. Thus, in his treatise "On Grace and Free Will," cap. ix., we read, "The rational creature, by the prerogative of his liberty, has been made, to some extent, the master of his own destinies, so that it is only by his own free will he becomes wicked and is justly condemned, or perseveres in good and merits salvation. . . . The merciful Father, Who wills to save all, nevertheless judges none worthy of salvation, whom He has not already proved willing to be saved." Also, cap. i., "The will is said to co-operate with grace by consenting. And salvation consists in this consent." These passages also show that St. Bernard knew nothing of intrinsically efficacious grace.—(Translator.)

And this not without a determinate and eternal decree, which is manifestly all the more frightening on account of its being unchangeably fixed from everlasting. Very terrifying, indeed, is that which we read in the Prophet Isaias, where God says, speaking to His angels, "Let us have pity on the wicked." And then, to their trembling question, "Will he not therefore learn justice?" He answers, "No," and He gives the reason: "In the land of the saints, he hath done wicked things, and he shall not see the glory of the Lord." Be afraid, ye clerics, tremble, ye ministers of the Church, who in the lands of the saints, which you have gotten into your possession, are doing such "wicked things," that, far from being content with the stipend which ought to satisfy you, you impiously and sacrilegiously keep for yourselves the superfluities that should go to the support of the indigent, shamelessly squandering the patrimony of the poor on the gratification of your own pride and luxury. Thus, you contract the guilt of a twofold iniquity, by robbing others of their property, and by abusing sacred things, which you make to subserve your vanity and wickedness.

Since, therefore, He Whose "judgments are a great deep" is here beheld showing mercy and compassion in time to such transgressors, but only to the end that He may not spare them in eternity, who would seek rest in this place? The vision is better calculated to inspire one with the terror of judgment than to suggest the security of a bedchamber. Terrible in truth is this place, and entirely incompatible with the quiet of repose. I shudder all over, whenever I enter it, repeating with trembling those terrifying words, "Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred."

And what wonder that I, who am but a leaf blown about by the wind, a dry straw, should there shake with fear, where even that greatest of contemplatives, the royal Psalmist, acknowledges that his "feet were almost moved, his steps had well-nigh slipt"? And he adds, "Because I had a zeal on occasion of the wicked, seeing the prosperity of sinners." Wherefore? Because "they are not in the labour of men; neither shall they be scourged like other men. Therefore, pride hath held them fast," that they may not humble themselves unto penance, but be condemned for their pride with the proud demon and his angels. For they who "are not in the labour of men," shall certainly be in the labour of demons. This the Judge declares in His sentence, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." Nevertheless, even this is a place of God, surely "no other but the house of God and the gate of heaven." For here the Lord is said to be feared, here "His name is holy and terrible," and here assuredly "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," as it were, the vestibule of His glory.

Do not be surprised, my brethren, that I have ascribed the beginning of wisdom to this second place rather than to the first. For there do we indeed hear wisdom teaching of all things, as it were, in a lecture-hall; but here we actually receive wisdom. There our minds are instructed, here our wills are affected. By being so instructed we become learned; by being so affected we are made wise. As not all who are illumined by the light of the sun are also warmed by his heat, so wisdom enlightens many as to what they ought to do, without giving them at the same time the good will and dis-

position to do it. It is one thing to have knowledge of great riches, but quite another to have possession of the same; for it is the possession of wealth and not the knowledge thereof that makes a man wealthy. In like manner, there is the greatest difference between knowing God and fearing Him; nor are we made wise by the former, but only by the latter, which alone can influence our will. Surely, my brethren, you would not call him wise who is inflated with his science. And none but the most foolish would attribute wisdom to those who "when they knew God, have not glorified Him as God, nor given thanks." I, for my part, agree with the Apostle where he manifestly pronounces "their heart" to be "foolish." Justly is it said that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," because it is only then the soul begins to relish God, when she is inspired with the fear of Him, not when she is instructed in the knowledge of Him. You fear the divine justice, you fear the divine power, and hence, inasmuch as fear gives savour, you will relish God as wise and just. Furthermore, relish makes a man wise,* as knowledge makes him learned, and riches wealthy.

What, then, of the first place I have mentioned? It only disposes to wisdom. There you are prepared for that wisdom of which you here obtain possession. This preparation consists in acquiring a knowledge of truth. But such knowledge most readily excites the swelling of vanity, unless it is repressed by fear, of which, therefore, it is truly said that "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom," for it is the first to oppose itself to the pest of folly. In the first place, then, we are put on the road to wisdom, in the second we are introduced

* "Sapor sapientem facit, tu scientia scientem."—(Translator.)

to it. Yet in neither does the contemplative find perfect repose, because in the one God appears as if distracted with cares, and in the other as if enraged against sinners. Seek not, therefore, the King's bedchamber in either place, not in the former, which is rather the Teacher's lecture-hall, nor in the latter, which bears a closer resemblance to the Judge's tribunal. But there is a third place, where the Lord appears truly tranquil and at rest. It is the place neither of the Judge nor of the Teacher, but of the Bridegroom, and which becomes for me, at least (whether for others, also, I know not), a real bedchamber, whenever it is granted me to enter there. But all too rare that privilege, alas! and all too short-lived. There we can plainly see that "the mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity upon them that fear Him." And happy he who can say, "I am a partaker with all them that fear Thee, and that keep Thy commandments." The purpose of God stands fixed, as well as His decree of mercy "upon them that fear Him," overlooking what is evil in them and rewarding what is good, and with admirable wisdom bringing it about that not alone what is good, but even what is evil shall "co-operate unto good for them." Oh, truly and alone "blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin." For there is no one * without sin,

* These words of the holy Preacher, just as the sentence cited from St. Paul, are intended to be taken *exceptis excipiendis* —as expressing merely a moral universality. For to say nothing of our Lord, it is absolutely certain that St. Bernard taught that throughout her whole life the Blessed Virgin was free from all sin, both original and actual. He has indeed been represented as an opponent of the doctrine of her Immaculate Conception, because of a letter of his in which he reproves the Canons of Lyons for celebrating a feast in honour of that mystery, and moreover appears to deny any sanctity to the

"because all have sinned and do need the glory of God." Yet "who shall accuse against the elect of God?" It suffices me unto all justice, that He alone be propitious to me against Whom alone I have sinned. Whatever He wills not to impute to me, is as if it never had been. God's righteousness is freedom from sin, but the righteousness of man is the forgiveness of God. Such things I saw in this third place, and I then understood the truth of the words, "Whosoever is born of God committeth not sin; for His seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." That is to say, his heavenly generation preserves him. This heavenly generation is nothing else but eternal predestination, whereby God has loved His elect and made them pleasing in His sight in His own Beloved Son. before the foundation of the world, and so "they in the sanctuary have appeared before Him, to see His

Conception itself. I shall answer in the words of Cardinal Manning: "It may be further proved (1) that the doctrine rejected by St. Bernard is a doctrine rejected by the Church at this time, viz., the supposition that the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin was a peculiarity arising from the order of nature, including her parents and even her ancestors within its range. (2) That the doctrine he taught under the name of the Immaculate Nativity, is in substance the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as now defined by the Church—that the exemption of the Blessed Virgin from original sin was a peculiar and personal privilege, bestowed upon her alone, not by the order of nature, but in the order of grace, not through the mediation of parents, but by a direct infusion of the grace of the Holy Ghost into the soul at the first moment of its existence. . . . With what joy would he (St. Bernard) not have hailed the authoritative definition of his own doctrine, perfect in identity of substance, only expressed with more scientific accuracy of mental and verbal analysis." This is the interpretation given to the Saint's words by B. Albert, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, Bellarmin, Perrone, and most moderns. Cf. Bellarmin, t. iv. l. iv. c. xv.; and Hurter t. ii. n. 644.—(Translator.)

power and His glory," in order that they might be made participators in the inheritance of Him, to Whose image they have shown themselves conformed. I have therefore observed that these are as if they had never sinned, because whatever faults they may seem to have committed in time, none at all shall appear in eternity, for the Father's "charity covereth a multitude of sins." David called those blessed also "whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered." At the thought of this, I, even I, have suddenly experienced such an infusion of confidence and joy as altogether exceeded the earlier emotion of fear, felt in the place of horrors, that is, in the place of the second vision. For it seemed to me that I was of the number of these blessed ones. Would to God that my happiness had been lasting! Again, O Lord, again, "visit me with Thy salvation, that I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the joy of Thy nation."

O place of true rest, and, in my opinion, well deserving to be called a bedchamber! For we do not here behold God either, as it were, excited with anger, or as if distracted with care; but His will is proved to be "good and acceptable and perfect." This vision soothes instead of terrifying. It lulls to rest, instead of arousing, our unquiet curiosity. It calms the mind instead of fatiguing it. Here is found perfect repose. The tranquillity of God tranquillises all about Him, and the contemplation of His rest is rest to the soul. Here we behold Him as a King, Who, after spending the day in hearing and judging causes in His tribunal, now, in the evening quiet, dismisses the multitudes, and laying aside all disturbing cares, retires to His royal residence for the night, and enters His bedchamber with a few friends,

whom He condescends to honour with this privilege of special familiarity. Here we may see Him taking His rest with equal security and privacy. Here we behold Him looking all the more serene because He perceives around Him only the faces of those whom He loves. If, my brethren, it should ever be the lot of any of you to be so transported for a time into this secret sanctuary of God, and there so rapt and absorbed as to be distracted or disturbed by no necessity of the body, no importunity of care, no stinging of conscience, or, what is more difficult to avoid, no inrush of corporeal images from the senses or the imagination, such a one can truly say, "The King hath brought me into His bedchamber." But I would not rashly affirm that this is the bedchamber whereof the Spouse boasts. Still it is a bedchamber, and a bedchamber of the King, because of the three places, to which I have assigned the three visions, only this "place is in peace." For, as I have shown, very little rest is enjoyed in the first, where the Lord, by showing Himself admirable, exercises our curiosity in the labour of inquiry; and none at all in the second, because He here appears so terrible as to overpower with fear our mortal infirmity. But in this third place, He deigns to reveal Himself not so terrible, not so admirable, as amiable, as serene, as tranquil, as "sweet and mild and plenteous in mercy to all that" gaze upon Him.

Now, to facilitate the retention of all that I have said in this lengthy discourse, I will repeat it in brief summary. Remember, then, the three times, the three merits, and the three rewards. Observe the times in connexion with the garden, the merits in the storeroom, and the rewards in the threefold contemplation of him

who seeks the King's bedchamber. I have already said quite enough about the storeroom. As concerning the garden and the bedchamber, if anything occurs to me that ought to be added or to be presented in a different way, you shall have it in its proper place. Otherwise you must be satisfied with what you have heard now, for I will not make any repetition, lest, which God forbid, that should engender weariness, which is spoken solely to the praise and glory of the Bridegroom of the Church, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXIV

On Detraction and the Necessity of uniting Faith with Good Works.

"The righteous love thee."

At length, my brethren, and for the third time, I have come back to you from Rome. And this my last return has been attended with more auspicious omens, and more manifest indications of heaven's good-will. For the Lion has ceased to rage, the power of evil has passed away, and peace has been restored to the Church. "In her sight is brought to nothing the malignant," who, for nearly eight years, kept her in a state of turmoil and confusion with his fearful schism. But shall it be to no purpose that I am brought back to you from such great dangers? No, my brethren, since I have been restored to your desires, I am willing and ready to help you along in your spiritual advancement. As I owe my life to the merit of your prayers, so I wish to live only for your interests and your salvation. Since, therefore, it is your desire that I should resume my lectures on the Canticle, begun so long ago, I willingly consent. But I judge it better to repeat and complete the last sermon,* which I was forced to break off,

* This sermon, as it is given here, was preached in the year 1138, after the Saint's return from Italy. We learn from the introduction that it had been interrupted during a previous delivery, the Preacher, apparently, having cut short his discourse to obey an urgent summons from his ecclesiastical

than to enter upon something altogether new. Yet I am afraid that my mind, so long distracted and preoccupied with cares, as unworthy as they were various, is not in a condition to handle this subject in a manner befitting its dignity. "But what I have I give you." And to my faithful service God will be able to add that which I have not, in order that I may transmit it to you. In case He should not, then, let my intelligence be censured, not my good-will.

We have to begin, I think, with the words, "The righteous love thee." But before proceeding to explain what they mean I must consider to whom they belong, that is, who is the speaker. For the commentator is expected to supply what the inspired author has passed over in silence. Perhaps, then, I had better assign these words to the "young maidens," and regard them as a continuation of the foregoing. For after saying, no doubt, to their mother, the Spouse, "We will be glad and rejoice in thee, remembering thy breasts more than wine," they went on and added this also, "The righteous love thee." As I suppose, they did so on account of some of their own number, who, whilst seeming to run with the others, yet entertained far different sentiments, seeking the things that were their own, not walking with simplicity or sincerity, but envying their

superiors. This accounts for the fact that some editions give 87 sermons on the Canticles, the interrupted and the repeated discourses being reckoned as two. But even where these are given as one, there is a great diversity in the readings. The reason of this is that St. Bernard preached the sermon with different exordiums on the two occasions, and hence Editors who wished to combine them, had ample room for discrepancies. The "Lion" is, of course, the antipope, Anacletus II, Peter di Leone, whose schism against Innocent II the Saint was mainly instrumental in bringing to a close.—(Translator.)

mother's incommunicable glory, and taking occasion to murmur against her from the fact that she alone had been brought into the storehouses. What is this but the same which the Apostle refers to as "perils from false brethren"? These are the persons whose reproaches presently oblige the Spouse to justify herself, when she answers them thus, "I am black but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem." It is, therefore, because of those who censure and calumniate her, that the good, the simple, the humble, and the meek "young maidens" say to their mother, in order to console her, "The righteous love thee." "Pay no heed," they tell her, "to the wicked reprehensions of these censorious ones, because the righteous love thee." There is certainly a sweet consolation in the consciousness that we possess the love of the virtuous, when, whilst doing good, we are maligned by the wicked. The esteem of the good, combined with the testimony of our own conscience, is sufficient to "stop the mouth of them that speak wicked things." "In the Lord shall my soul be praised; let the meek hear and rejoice." "Let the meek rejoice," says the Spouse. "Let me but please the meek, and patiently will I endure whatever reproaches the envy of the reprobate may hurl against me."

It is in this sense, as it seems to me, that the "young maidens" spoke the words, "the righteous love thee." Such an interpretation, at least in my judgment, has the merit of being very reasonable and natural. For almost in every company of "young maidens" some individuals are to be found who curiously examine the conduct of the Spouse, but rather to discover matter for criticism than models for imitation. The virtues of their seniors are a source of bitter grief to such,

whereas they are eager to feed their minds on their failings. You may notice them going apart, meeting and sitting together, and then relaxing their insolent tongues to indulge in the detestable sin of murmuring. They are closely conjoined one with another, and they all but forget to breathe, in the ardour of their desire to hear and to speak detraction. They contract a friendship with a view to calumny; they live in harmony for the propagation of discord; they form an alliance to wage war against fraternal charity; and with an equal affection of concordant malignity they celebrate together the symposium of hate. It was thus Pilate and Herod acted of old, concerning whom the Evangelist narrates that they "were made friends on that same day," namely, on the day of the Lord's Passion. "When (they) come together, therefore, into one place, it is not now to eat the Lord's Supper," but rather to drink themselves and to give others to drink of the "chalice of devils." And whilst the tongues of some communicate the poison which brings souls to a state of perdition, the minds of others welcome the spiritual death that enters through their ears. Thus, according to Jeremias, "death is come up through our windows," whilst with itching ears and restless tongues, we are busy in ministering to each other the deadly cup of detraction. Oh, let not my soul have part in the council of slanderers, since they are objects of hatred to God, as the Apostle bears witness, saying that detractors are "hateful to God." And hear how the Lord Himself, speaking in the Psalms, confirms this: "The man," He says, "that in private detracted his neighbour, him did I persecute."

This, my brethren, should not surprise us, since

detraction is recognised to be more particularly and more directly opposed and irreconcilably antagonistic to charity, which is God, than any of the other vices, as you yourselves may take notice. For whoever commits a sin of detraction proves in the first place that he is himself void of charity. What other motive can such an offender have except to bring him whom he slanders into hatred and contempt with his hearers? The detracting tongue, moreover, wounds charity in all who listen to it, and, as far as depends on it, utterly destroys and extinguishes that virtue. And not alone on those present has it this effect, but on the absent also, as many as the flying word may happen to reach through the agency of the listeners, who repeat what they have heard. Behold how easily and how speedily a countless number of souls can be infected with the deadly virus of this moral plague by the slanderous word that "runneth swiftly." Therefore, the Prophet says of detractors, "Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood," as swift, that is to say, as the "word" that "runneth swiftly." There is, perhaps, but one speaker, and he speaks but one word. And yet, that word, insinuating the poison through the ears, murders in a single moment the souls of a multitude of hearers. For the heart that is filled with the bitter venom of envy, can only send forth the bitterness of malice through the instrument of the tongue, according to the testimony of Christ, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

There are different species of detractors. Some without shame or concealment spit forth the poison of this pestilence, according as it rises from the heart to the mouth. Others attempt to cover the malignity con-

ceived in their minds and which they cannot keep in, under the mask of a pretended embarrassment. You may observe them beginning by heaving deep sighs. Then, slowly and solemnly, with melancholy countenance, with downcast looks and whining voice, they give free rein to their detracting tongues, and their slanders are received by the listener only the more unsuspectingly, the more evidently they appear to be spoken with reluctance and to proceed from compassion rather than from malice. "It grieves me much," says one, "because of my great love for him, that I have never been able to persuade so-and-so to give up such and such a fault." "One thing," says another, "is absolutely certain, namely, that nothing could ever have induced me to be the first to open my lips about this matter. But now that it has been made known by another, I cannot deny the fact. I am very sorry to have to admit that the report is true." And he adds, "It is a great pity. For in other respects he is an excellent man, but herein, I candidly confess, there is no excuse for him."

Having said so much against this most malignant vice, I will now return to the order of my exposition, and I will try to explain whom, in this place, we are to understand by the "righteous." I do not suppose any sensible person will here understand this word in its original meaning, as signifying straightness in material things, as if they who love the Spouse were the upright in body. Hence I have to understand and explain it of spiritual righteousness, that is, of the uprightness or rectitude of the heart and the mind. For it is the Spirit Who speaks, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." It was, therefore, according to the soul, not

according to the body, composed of the slime of earthy matter, that God made man upright, when "He created him to His own image and likeness." For "the Lord our God is righteous, and there is no iniquity in Him." Therefore, the righteous God made man righteous, like unto Himself. That is to say, He made man without iniquity, just as "there is no iniquity in Him." Moreover, iniquity is a vice, not of the flesh, but of the spirit. By this you may know that it is in your spiritual nature, not in your gross and material part, that the image of God has to be preserved or restored. For "God is a Spirit," and they who wish to retain or to recover their likeness to Him, must enter into their own hearts and apply themselves in spirit to that spiritual work. There "beholding the glory of the Lord with open face," they shall "be transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Yet God also has given man the uprightness that characterises his bodily frame. And perhaps the reason of this was in order that such physical erectness of our exterior and baser element, might admonish our interior, spiritual man, who is made to God's image, of the necessity of preserving spiritual uprightness, and that the beauty of the body might stand in reproachful contrast with the deformity of the soul. For what can be so incongruous as to bear about a crooked mind in a straight body? It is surely a shame and a monstrosity that, whilst this "earthy vessel," this material envelope, keeps its eyes lifted up from the earth, directs its looks to the heavens, and contemplates with delight the luminaries of the firmament, the rational soul, on the contrary, that spiritual and celestial creature, should bend her

gaze to the ground, that is, should lower her internal faculties and affections to the level of material things, and, whereas she ought to be "brought up in purple," should attach herself to unworthy objects and "embrace the dung" as the filth-loving swine. Be ashamed, O my soul, of having thus exchanged the divine image for the brutish. Be ashamed of wallowing in filth, thou who art of heavenly origin. "O my soul," exclaims the body, "compare thyself with me and be confounded! Created righteous, like to thy Creator, thou hast obtained in me also a helper like to thyself, according to the analogy of corporeal uprightness. Whithersoever thou mayest turn thy gaze, whether to God above thee or to me below, 'for no man ever hated his own flesh,' on all sides thou dost behold various reflections of thine own beauty, everywhere in accordance with the dignity of thy position, thou art receiving friendly admonitions from the Spirit of wisdom. But whilst I have retained and preserved the prerogative of uprightness bestowed upon me on thy account, what confusion ought to overwhelm thee for having lost thine? Why must the Creator behold His own divine image effaced from thee, the while He contemplates thine preserved and constantly reproduced and exhibited in me? Now thou hast turned to thine own confusion whatever help was due to thee from me. Changed from a rational to a brutal and bestial spirit, thou art unworthy any longer to inhabit a human body, and dost but abuse my service."

Such deformed souls cannot love the Spouse, since, being of the world, they are not friends of the Bridegroom. "Whosoever," says St. James, "will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God." There-

fore, it is deformity or curvature of soul to seek after and to relish "the things that are upon earth"; whilst, on the contrary, spiritual uprightness consists in meditating and desiring "the things that are above." But, in order that this uprightness be perfect, it must be found not alone in the thoughts and the feelings of the mind, but also in external conduct harmonising therewith. So, I would call him perfectly upright whose mind is imbued with sound doctrine, and whose practice is in keeping with his principles. Let faith and conduct reveal to you the condition of the invisible soul. That soul you may consider as righteous which professes the Catholic faith and performs the works of justice. But if either faith or works be lacking, you need have no hesitation in pronouncing her to be deformed. For thus we read, "If thou rightly offerest and dost not rightly divide, thou hast sinned." We indeed "rightly offer" each of these two, faith and good works; but we do not "rightly divide" one from the other. Do not, my brethren, be righteous offerers and unrighteous dividers. Why would you separate works from faith? Such a separation is sinful and destroys the life of your faith, since "faith without good works is dead." And would you offer to the Lord a victim that is already dead? For if charity be, so to speak, the soul of faith, what is that faith which "worketh" not "by charity" but a lifeless corpse? Are you, then, doing well in honouring God with such a putrescent victim? Are you doing well in trying to propitiate Him by offering Him the faith you have murdered? How can that be a peace-offering which is immolated with so much dreadful discord? It is not surprising that Cain, after murdering his faith, should rise up also against his brother.

Why, O Cain, dost thou wonder that the Lord Who despises thyself has not regard to thy offerings? Nor is it anything strange if He refuses to look upon thee, who art so divided in thyself. Why dost thou deliver up thy soul to envy, whilst thy hand is employed in the work of piety? Thou canst not make peace with God so long as thou remainest at variance with thyself. Thou dost but further provoke instead of appeasing His anger, and if not yet indeed by impiously striking, at least by not rightly dividing. For thou art already a *fideicide*, viz., a slayer of thy faith, although not as yet a fratricide. Not even now canst thou be righteous when thy hand is extended to God, whilst at the same time envy and hatred of thy brother keep thy heart bent down to the earth. How can righteousness have place in thee, whose faith is dead, whose work is death, whose devotion is extinguished, whose bitterness is exceeding great? The offerer, I allow, has faith, but his faith contains no vivifying love. The oblation is right, but cruel the division.

The death of faith, my brethren, is its separation from charity. You believe in Christ. Then do the works of Christ, that your faith may live. Let your faith be animated by love, and its sincerity proved by virtuous actions. Do not stoop to the earth by worldly conduct, you whom a heavenly faith holds erect. You say that you abide in Christ. Therefore you "also ought to walk even as He walked." But if you seek your own glory, if you are jealous of the prosperity of others, if you speak evil of the absent, or retaliate injuries, in this you are not imitating Christ. To such false Christians I say: You proclaim by your words that you know God, and yet you deny Him

by your deeds. Surely you have not acted well but wickedly in giving your tongues to Christ, and your hearts to the devil. Hear, therefore, what the Almighty says of such: "With their lips they glorify Me, but their heart is far from Me." No, you cannot be righteous, since you make so unrighteous a division. You are unable to lift up your heads, pressed down as they are by the yoke of Satan. Neither have you the power to draw yourselves erect, being "dominated by iniquity." For your "iniquities are gone over" your "head, and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon" you. For "Wickedness is seated upon the talent of lead," * according to the Prophet Zachary. You now understand that even right faith cannot make a man righteous unless it "worketh by charity." And he who is without charity has not wherewith to love the Spouse. But neither are works, however right, sufficient to render the heart righteous, without right faith. For who would call him righteous that is not pleasing to God? But "without faith it is impossible to please God." He who is not pleasing to God cannot be pleased with God, since no one that is pleased with God can be displeasing to Him. Moreover, whoever is displeased with God, shall also be displeased with His Spouse. In what way, then, can he be righteous, who loves neither God nor the Church of God? For it is to the Church the "young maidens" say, "The righteous love thee." Since, therefore, neither faith without

* The reference is to Zachary v. 7, 8. "And behold a talent of lead was carried, and behold a woman sitting in the midst of the vessel. And he said: This is wickedness. And he cast her into the midst of the vessel, and cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof." Either the Saint had a different reading, or else he is quoting freely.—(Translator.)

works, nor works without faith are sufficient * for righteousness of soul, let us, my brethren, who have right faith in Christ, endeavour to make our ways and our wills also right. Let us lift up both our hearts and our hands to God that we may be found completely righteous, proving the rectitude of our faith by the righteousness of our actions. So shall we be lovers of the Bride, and the friends of the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for evermore. Amen.

* This powerful vindication of Catholic doctrine was called for by the errors of Abelard, who not only denied the necessity of good works, to which he would allow no supernatural value, but also, by his deification of reason, made faith itself a supernumerary. Thus he was at once the precursor of the sixteenth century "Reformers," whose motto was "faith alone," and of our modern Indifferentists, who say to us, "do what you think right and don't worry about creeds." Cf. the Saint's "Tractatus de Erroribus Abaelardi," or Epistle 190, addressed to Pope Innocent II.—(Translator.)

SERMON XXV

On the Blackness and the Beauty of the Bridegroom and the Bride.

"I am black but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem."

You recollect, my brethren, what I said in my last discourse, that the Spouse is compelled to reply to the attacks of certain envious critics, who, in outward seeming, appear to belong to the company of "young maidens," but in disposition and sentiment are far removed from them. She answers them with the words, "I am black, but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem." Evidently they had been maligning her, reproaching her with her blackness. But observe the patience and benignity of the Spouse. Not only does she not return insult for insult, but she even meets malediction with benediction, calling them "daughters of Jerusalem," who, for their malice, deserved to be called daughters of Babylon, or daughters of Baal, or any other opprobrious name that might have occurred to her. Clearly, she has learned from the Prophet, or rather from the unction of grace which teaches mildness, that the "bruised reed" must not be broken, nor the "smoking flax" extinguished. She considered, therefore, that they who of themselves were sufficiently excited, should not be subjected to further provocation, nor have other irritants added to the torturing stings of envy. Rather she endeavoured to be "peaceful with them that hateth peace," knowing that she is a "debtor"

even "to the unwise." Hence, she preferred to soothe them with words of gentleness, because she was more concerned to secure the salvation of these weaklings, than to avenge the wrong to herself.

Such perfection, my brethren, should be the ambition of all. But it is especially the ideal after which all prelates are bound to strive. For good and faithful superiors are well aware that it is not dignity and pomp that have been committed to their charge, but the eternal salvation of weak and languishing souls. Hence, whenever they discover, by the symptom of a querulous voice, the internal discontent of any of these, although it be manifested by outbursts of reproachful and contumelious language against themselves, they realise that they are physicians rather than masters, and so instead of taking revenge, they immediately provide a remedy for this spiritual paroxysm. Here, then, is the reason why the Spouse calls her censurers "daughters of Jerusalem," after enduring their malevolence and malignity, in order, namely, with words of kindness, to appease their disaffection, to calm their agitation, and to cure their envy. For it is written, "A mild answer breaketh wrath." Nevertheless, in certain respects, such souls are really "daughters of Jerusalem," and the Spouse speaks truth in calling them so. For, on account of the sacraments of the Church, common to them with the good, on account of the common profession of Catholic faith, and the (at least, visible) communion with all the faithful, and the hope of heaven, with regard to which we must not despair of any, so long as they live, no matter how sinful their lives may be—for these reasons, I say, the Spouse is right in giving the title "daughters of Jerusalem" even to the malcontents.

Let us examine what she means by saying "I am black (in colour) but beautiful" (of form—*formosa*). Is there a contradiction in these words, my brethren? God forbid! But I speak on account of the simple-minded, who are unable to distinguish between colour and form. Form has reference and relation to the composition of bodies, whereas colour, such as blackness, belongs only to the superficies. Not everything, therefore, which happens to be black is on this account alone to be considered as deformed. In the eye, for instance, black colour is not displeasing. Black stones have an agreeable effect in ornamentation. Black hair also enhances the beauty and charm of a clear complexion. And your own experience will furnish you with innumerable examples of the same. Countless are the things which, looking to their colour alone, you would pronounce unprepossessing, but which appear really beautiful in form. In this way, perhaps, the Spouse may combine with the loveliness of her form an unsightly defect of colour; yet this can only be the case in the place of her pilgrimage. For the time shall come when, in the fatherland, her glorious Bridegroom will "present her to Himself a glorious Bride, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." But if she said now that she has not blackness, she would deceive herself, and the truth would not be in her. Wherefore, my brethren, wonder not that she confesses her imperfection, saying, "I am black." Yet, at the same time, she boasts that she is beautiful. How, indeed, could she be otherwise, to whom the Bridegroom said, "Come, My beautiful one"? But she who is invited to come, evidently has not yet arrived at her destination. So, perhaps, this word "come" is used lest we should think the epithet

"beautiful" applies, not to the discoloured Spouse, who is still advancing laboriously on her way, but to that blessed one that reigns immaculate in heaven.

But hear why she calls herself black, and why beautiful. Does she mean that she is black because of the benighted life she previously led under the power of the prince of darkness, whilst she still bore the image of the earthly man; and that she is beautiful by reason of the heavenly similitude, into which she was afterwards transformed, when she began to walk in newness of life? But if so, why does she not say in the past tense, "I *was* black," rather than in the present, "I *am* black"? If, nevertheless, any one of you be satisfied with this interpretation, with regard to what follows "as the tents of Cedar, as the curtains of Solomon," it will be necessary to suppose that the Spouse compares herself to the "tents of Cedar" on account of her former evil life, and to the "curtains of Solomon" on account of her present sanctity. Tents and curtains sometimes mean the same in the Scriptures, as in that passage of Jeremias where he says, "My tents are destroyed on a sudden, and my curtains in a moment." According to this sense, therefore, she was black, at first, like the hideous tents of Cedar, but later on she became beautiful as the splendid curtains of the King.

Let us now see whether both her blackness and her beauty cannot be explained with reference to her later and reformed life. If we consider the exterior of the saints, that aspect of them which strikes our senses, how lowly and abject they appear, how wretched and contemptible! And yet they are all the while most admirable in their interior, and "beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the

same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." Does it not seem to you, my brethren, that every such soul can truly reply to those who taunt her with her blackness, "I am black but beautiful"? Would you like me to show you one of these souls, at once black and beautiful? "His epistles indeed, they say, are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible." This was St. Paul. "O ye daughters of Jerusalem," do you thus judge St. Paul by his "bodily presence," and despise him as discoloured and deformed, because you perceive him to be a man of diminutive stature, and afflicted "in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in many more labours, in stripes above measure, in deaths often"? For these are the things that make him black. It is because of these that the Doctor of Nations is reputed inglorious, ignoble, discoloured, obscure, as the "offscouring of all." Yet is not he the one that was rapt up to paradise, who, passing through the first and the second, penetrated, "by reason of his purity," even to the third heaven?

O truly most beautiful soul, which, although dwelling in a weak little body, is yet so honoured as to be admitted to the vision of the celestial loveliness, neither rejected by angelic magnificence, nor repelled by the Divine Glory! And do you call such a soul black? She is "black but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem." She is black in your judgment, but beautiful in the estimation of God and of His angels. And, although black, she is so only in her exterior. But to St. Paul "it is a very small thing to be judged by you," or by those who judge "according to the face." For man "looketh on the face, but God regardeth the

heart." Therefore, even if his exterior is black, he is yet beautiful interiorly; so that he is pleasing to Him to Whom he has striven to approve himself, although not to you, for if he still pleased you he would not be a servant of Christ. O blessed blackness, which begets in us whiteness of soul, luminousness of knowledge, and purity of conscience!

Hear what God promises, through His Prophet, to persons "black" with this kind of blackness, who appear to be discoloured by the humility of penance, or by the fervour of charity, as if by the scorching heat of the sun. "If your sins be as scarlet they shall be made as white as snow; if they be as red as crimson, they shall be white as wool." Surely, then, we ought not to despise in the saints this outward blackness which becomes the source of interior brightness, and so prepares in the soul the seat of wisdom. For, according to the Wise Man, wisdom "is the brightness of eternal life." Hence, truly bright must that soul be which she chooses for her seat. But since we know that "the soul of the just man is the seat of wisdom," I am safe in concluding that the soul of the just man must be also bright and luminous. Indeed, it is likely enough that justice and spiritual brightness mean the same thing. Now, St. Paul was just, since for him was "laid up a crown of justice." Therefore there can be no doubt that his soul was bright, and therein was seated wisdom, so that he could "speak wisdom amongst the perfect," "wisdom hidden in a mystery, which none of the princes of this world knew." Moreover, this brightness of wisdom and justice in him, was either produced or merited by the external blackness of his "bodily presence," and his "much watchings" and

his "fastings often." Consequently, even the very blackness of St. Paul is far more precious and attractive than any degree of external beauty, than all the pomp and glory of earthly kings. Not to be compared with it is any comeliness of mortal flesh, any fairness of a skin destined as fuel for the flames, any loveliness of a delicately-tinted complexion, soon to be the spoil of death and putrefaction, any magnificence of dress liable to the corrupting influence of age, any splendour of gold and precious stones, or of anything else that passes away with time.

Good reason have the saints, therefore, for devoting and giving themselves up with all diligence to the business of caring for and embellishing the inward man, who is made to the image of God and "renewed day by day"; whilst they contemptuously refuse any adornment or superfluous attention to their outward man "who is corrupted." For they feel convinced that nothing can be so acceptable to God as His own image, provided it has been restored to its original beauty. Therefore, "all" their "glory is within," not outside, that is to say, not in the flower of the field, or in the mouths of the multitude, but in the Lord. Hence do they say, "This is our glory, the testimony of our conscience," because the only witness of their conscience is God, Whom alone they desire to please, and in pleasing Whom the only true and sovereign glory consists. Certainly, no small glory is that which is within, in which even the Lord of glory disdains not to glory, as David tells us when he says, "All the glory of the King's daughter is within." Besides, each one's glory is all the more secure, the more he possesses it within himself, and not in another. However, it is

not alone in the interior brightness, but also in the exterior blackness that there is found occasion for glorying, lest anything in the saints should go for loss, but that all things might "co-operate unto good" for them. Hence we see them glorying in tribulations as as well as in hope. "Gladly," says the Apostle, "will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." O infirmity worthy to be desired with all ardour, which is compensated for by the power of Christ! Who will grant me not only to be infirm, but to be utterly forsaken and abandoned by my own strength and my own power, in order that I may be propped up by the power and strength of the "Lord of virtues"! For "power is made perfect in infirmitv" as Christ bears witness. Hence St. Paul could affirm, "When I am weak, then am I powerful."

This being so, the Spouse most skilfully turns to her own glory what her censurers taunted her with as a reproach, boasting not only of her beauty, but also of her blackness. For she is not ashamed of this blackness, knowing that the same kind of blackness appeared even in her Bridegroom. And what matter for glorying it is to be assimilated to Him! Therefore, in her eyes there can be nothing so glorious as to "bear the reproach of Christ." Hence that "voice of exultation and of salvation," "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of my Lord, Jesus Christ." The ignominy of the cross is gratifying to him who is not ungrateful to the Crucified. It is blackness indeed, but it is also the image and likeness of the Lord. Go to the Prophet Isaias, and he will describe for you how he beheld Him in spirit. For whom but Christ does he call the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with

infirmity," adding that "there is no beauty in Him nor comeliness"? And he goes on, "And we have reputed Him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins, and by His bruises we are healed." Behold what makes Him black! Add to this the testimony of holy David, "Beautiful in form above the sons of men," and you will have verified in the Bridegroom all that the Spouse witnesses of herself when she says, "I am black but beautiful."

Does it not, then, seem to you, my brethren, that according to what has been said, He also could have replied to the Jews who reproached Him, "I am black but beautiful, O ye" sons "of Jerusalem." Black assuredly was He in Whom there was "no beauty nor comeliness." Black also as being "a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people." Again, why should I be afraid to call Him black Who even made Himself "sin," as the Apostle declares? Lastly, contemplate Him, clad in a ragged and dirty mantle, livid with wounds, defiled with spittle, pale with the pallor of death, and surely now at least you will acknowledge Him to be black. Then question the apostles as to the appearance He presented on the mountain; or ask the angels what is it that makes them desire to gaze upon Him, and you will doubtless marvel at what they shall tell you of His beauty. Therefore, He is beautiful in Himself, but black for our sakes. Yet even in Thy Human Form, according to which Thou art my Brother, how beautiful Thou art to me, O Lord Jesus! Not because of the mighty miracles of Thy divine power, which render Thee so illustrious, but "on account of Thy truth, and Thy meekness, and Thy

justice." Blessed is the man who diligently studies Thee conversing as a Man amongst men, and endeavours to imitate Thee in the practice of these virtues, to the utmost of his power! Already has Thy "beautiful one" obtained this part of her beatitude, the first fruits, as it were, of her dowry, being neither slow to copy what is beautiful in Thee, nor ashamed to participate in the sufferings which make Thee black. For this reason also she said, "I am black but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem." And she added the comparisons, "as the tents of Cedar, as the curtains of Solomon." But these latter expressions are obscure, and we are too weary now to enter upon their exposition. You shall therefore have an opportunity for "knocking" by prayer at the door of Wisdom. If you knock sincerely, there is One Who will come to open for you these mysteries. Nor will He delay to open, since it is He Himself Who invites you to knock. For He it is that "openeth and no man shutteth," the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is blessed for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XXVI

IN WHAT SENSE THE BLACKNESS OF THE SPOUSE IS COMPARED TO THE TENTS OF CEDAR—THE SAINT'S LAMENT OVER HIS BROTHER.

"As the tents of Cedar, as the curtains of Solomon."

"As the tents of Cedar, as the curtains * of Solomon." Here, my brethren, I have to begin to-day, where yesterday's sermon ended. And you expect me now to explain these words of the Spouse, as well as the manner of their connexion with the text of my last discourse, "I am black but beautiful," with which they express a double comparison. As for the connexion, it may be considered in either of two ways. Both comparisons may be referred to the first clause of the foregoing, viz., "I am black." Or we may take the first and second comparisons, namely, that of the tents of Cedar, and that of the curtains of Solomon, as relating, respectively, to the first and second parts of the sentence, "I am black, but beautiful." The former interpretation possesses the advantage of greater simplicity and clearness. However, I mean to try both. And I will begin with the latter, which appears to be the more difficult. As a matter of fact, the only difficulty is to see what the "pavilions of Solomon" have

* "Pelles" = "skins," hence "curtains," which the Douay version. But these curtains must be taken to meanishe covering of tents or pavilions. Thus the same word is rendered "pavilion" by the same Translators, Ps. ciii. 2.—(Translator.)

in common with beauty; for the connexion between Cedars and blackness will be sufficiently patent to all, when it is remembered that the word "Cedar," in the Hebrew, signifies darkness. It is also evident that "tent" or "tabernacle" can here be taken in a consonant sense. For what are these tents but the bodies in which we sojourn? "For we have not here a lasting city, but we seek for one that is to come." We also carry on war in them, as in tents, using "violence" in order "to bear away the kingdom." Hence Job tells us that "the life of man upon earth is a warfare." And "whilst we" fight "in this body, we are absent from the Lord," that is, from the Light. For "the Lord is the Light." Therefore, the more we are absent from Him, waging war in the tents of our bodies, the more are we in darkness, that is to say, in Cedar. Consequently, every such exile ought to make his own that tearful cry, "Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged! I have dwelt with the inhabitants of Cedar; my soul hath been long a sojourner." Hence, this dwelling of our body is not to be regarded as the residence of a citizen, nor as the home of a native, but either as the tent of a soldier, or the inn of a traveller. Yes, I repeat it: this body is but a tent, which by its opaqueness, so to speak, shuts out from the soul, during her sojourn on earth, the gladdening influence of the circumambient Light, permitting it to see that Light only "through a glass" and "in a dark manner," but not yet "face to face."

Would you like to know, my brethren, the cause of the Church's blackness and the reason why a certain amount of rust still adheres even to the most beautiful souls? I will tell you. It is all due, beyond question, to

these tents of Cedar, to the prosecution of a laborious war, to the prolongation of their miserable sojourning, to the bitterness of their painful exile, to the weakness and yet oppressiveness of the body; "for the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things." Wherefore, they even "desire to be dissolved," that, being delivered from the body, they may fly to the embraces of Christ. Hence the cry of one such afflicted soul, "Unhappy man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?" Souls like this know very well that so long as they abide in the tents of Cedar, their purity cannot be altogether free from every spot and stain, from every shade of blackness. And so they long for dissolution, in order to be delivered perfectly from such defilements. This is the reason why the Spouse declared herself to be as black as the "tents of Cedar."

But in what sense is she "beautiful as the curtains of Solomon"? It seems to me, my brethren, that there is wrapt up in these curtains something I know not what, of such sublimity and sanctity that most certainly I would not presume to expose it at all, except at the bidding of Him Who hid it there and sealed it. For I have read that "he that is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory." I will wait, therefore, and procrastinate. Do you, meantime, as usual, impetrate by your prayers the light and grace of the Holy Spirit, that with desires intensified in proportion to our confidence, we may return to this subject, which demands more than ordinary attention. And perhaps the devout suppliant will discover what would be missed by the rash inquirer.

In any case, grief at the calamity which has befallen us will not allow me to continue.

How * long shall I dissemble? How long shall I endeavour to conceal within myself the fire which consumes my broken heart and devours my very vitals? A secret flame creeps forward more freely, and more cruelly rages. What have I to do with this Canticle of love, submerged as I am in an ocean of bitterness? The vehemence of my grief draws away my attention, and the anger of the Lord has drunk up my soul. For "my heart hath forsaken me," since he is gone who used to leave me, in some sense, free for divine contemplation. But I have done violence to my feelings. I have striven to conceal my sorrow until now, afraid lest perhaps it should seem that faith had succumbed to natural affection. Therefore, whilst all others wept, I alone, with tearless eyes, followed the cruel bier, as

* This magnificent threnody, the impetuous outpouring of an overcharged heart, must be rea in the original to be fully appreciated. It was delivered in 1138. In the judgment of Dom Rivet (*Hist. Littér.*, t. 10, pref.) nothing equal to it has appeared in the Latin language since the Augustan Age, if we except the two funeral orations on St. Malachy, by the same author. Pierre Béringer of Poitiers, to avenge the defeat of his master, Abelard, at the hands of St. Bernard, had the impudence to accuse the holy abbot of stealing certain passages from St. Ambrose. But the charge has been triumphantly refuted by the illustrious Mabillon. And if some expressions appear to us to be extravagant, we must bear in mind that St. Bernard, as we learn from his biographers, was gifted with an extraordinarily affectionate heart, and scarcely ever attended a funeral without shedding tears. This should also show us how utterly false is the notion entertained by many, viz., that sanctity tends to blunt our natural sensibilities. Grace does not destroy but rather perfects nature, and it remains always true that to be a holy man is to be wholly a man. The lessons for the feast of Blessed Gerard in the Cistercian Breviary are taken from this sermon.—(Translator.)

you can yourselves bear witness. With tearless eyes I stood at the graveside until the last sad rites were all accomplished. Vested in my priestly robes, I pronounced with my own lips the usual prayers over the remains. With my own hands I sprinkled clay, according to custom, over my beloved Gerard's body, soon to be changed itself to clay. They that watched me were weeping, and they wondered why I did not weep myself, although he was less the object of universal compassion than was I, who had been bereaved of him. For surely harder than iron must the heart have been that would not melt to see me surviving Gerard. His death was a common calamity, but this was reckoned as nothing in comparison with the personal loss to me. I tried to resist my sorrow with all the force I could gather from faith, striving to suppress even those vain involuntary emotions, occasioned by what is, after all, but our natural destiny, the debt of our mortality, the necessity of our condition, the ordinance of the Mighty One, the judgment of the Just One, the scourge of the Terrible One. Such reflections led me to restrain myself constantly, then and to the present, from overmuch weeping, whilst all the time I felt exceedingly sad and afflicted. For although I could control my tears, I had not the same power over my sorrow; but as it is written, "I was troubled and I spoke not." But pent-up grief strikes its roots the more deeply within, becoming the more bitter, as I believe, from the fact that it is refused an outlet. My brethren, I have to acknowledge myself vanquished. I must now give vent to my interior anguish. I must exhibit my distress to the eyes of my children, that, realising its magnitude, they may think more kindly

thoughts of my affliction and more sweetly console me.

You know, O my children, you know how reasonable is my sorrow, how worthy of tears is the loss I have sustained. For you understand how faithful a companion has been taken from my side "in the way in which I was walking." You know what was his attentiveness to duty, his diligence at work, his sweetness and amiability of character. Who was so indispensable to me? By whom was I so much beloved? He was my brother by blood, but more my brother by religious profession. Oh, pity my lot, you to whom these things are known! I was weak in body, and he supported me. I was pusillanimous, and he encouraged me. I was slothful and negligent, and he spurred me on. I was improvident and forgetful, and he acted as my monitor. Oh, whither hast thou been taken from me? Why hast thou been torn from my arms, "a man of one mind," "a man according to my heart"? We have loved each other in life, how then is it that we are separated in death? O most cruel divorce, which only death could have power to cause! For when in life wouldst thou have so deserted me? Yes, it is unmistakably the work of death, this most woeful separation. For what but death, that enemy of all things sweet, would not have spared the sweet bond of our mutual love? With good reason is that called death and a double death, which in its rage has slain two in carrying off one. Has not that separation been death to me also? Yea, and especially to me, for whom is preserved a life more bitter than any death. For I live indeed, but only to endure a living death. And shall I call such an existence life? O unfeeling death, how much kinder

it had been to deprive me of the possession of life than of its fruit! For life without fruit is worse than death, since we are told that two evils, the axe and the fire, await the tree that bears no fruit. Therefore, through envy of my labours, "thou hast removed far from me my friend and my neighbour," to whose zeal was mainly due whatever fruit those labours yielded. Hence it were far better for me to have lost my life than thy company, O my brother, who wert the earnest stimulator of my studies in the Lord, my faithful helper, and my prudent counsellor. Why, I ask, have we been so united in brotherly love? Or, so united, why so parted? O most mournful lot! But it is my fate that is pitiable, not his. For thou, sweet brother, if separated from thy dear ones, art now united to others still more dear. But what consolation remains now to wretched me, after losing thee, my only comfort? Our bodily companionship was a source of enjoyment to both of us, on account of the conformity of our wills and sentiments, but I alone have suffered from our separation. The enjoyment was common, but I am left the monopoly of the sadness and the sorrow. "Wrath hath come upon me"; "wrath is strong over me." Sweet was the presence of each to other, sweet our companionship, sweet our conversation. But whilst I have lost the happiness of us both, thou hast only exchanged it for better. For in this exchange "there is a great reward."

With what usuary of delights, with what wealth of benedictions, art thou compensated for our absence to-day, O my dearest brother! In return for my company, thou art now enjoying the presence of Christ. Nor canst thou deem it a loss to be separated from us,

associated, as thou surely art, to the angelic choirs above. Thou, therefore, hast no cause to complain of thy separation from us, since the Lord of Majesty has so generously admitted thee to the society and fellowship of Himself and of His angels. But what have I obtained in place of thee? How I should like to know what sentiments thou dost now entertain towards me, that "only one" of thine, distraught and overwhelmed as I am with sufferings and solicitudes, and bereft of thee, the staff of my weakness!—if indeed it be permitted to one who has been plunged into the abyss of Light Divine, and submerged in the ocean of everlasting felicity, to concern himself still with his miserable friends on earth.* For, although thou didst formerly know us according to the flesh, perhaps now thou dost no longer know us. Perhaps, having "entered into the powers of the Lord," thou wilt henceforth "be mindful of justice alone," and forgetful of us. "But he who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit," and is completely transformed into a sort of divine affection, so that, being filled with God, he can no longer take interest or pleasure in anything but God and in the things in which God takes interest and pleasure. Yet "God is charity," and the more closely the creature is united to Him, the more full he is of charity. Again, although God is not passible, He is yet compassionate, for to Him "it is proper to have mercy and to spare." Therefore, must thou, too, dearest brother, be merciful, since thou cleavest to One so merciful, even though misery has

* Cf. Tennyson's address to his dead friend :—

"And I, can clouds of nature stain
The starry clearness of the free?
How is it? Canst thou feel for me
Some painless sympathy with pain?"

now no access to thee. Thou must still feel compassion, though suffer thou canst not. Hence, thy affection, far from failing, has but been transformed. In putting on God, thou has not put off thy care for us, because even "He hath care for us," as we learn from St. Peter. Thou hast laid aside only thy infirmity, not also thy piety. And as "charity never falleth away," thou wilt not "forget me unto the end."

It seems to me that I hear my brother answering and saying, "Can a mother forget her infant so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee." It surely is not expedient that I should be forgotten by thee. Thou knowest how I am situated, where I lie prostrate, in what a plight thou hast left me. And now there is none to reach me a helping hand. In every emergency I still, as was my wont, look around for Gerard, but he is nowhere to be seen. Then, alas! I groan with misery, as "a man without help." Whom shall I henceforth consult in my doubts? On whom shall I lean when misfortune overtakes me? Who will bear my burdens? Who will deliver me from dangers? Were not my steps in every undertaking directed by the eyes of Gerard? Was not my own breast, O Gerard, less intimately acquainted with my cares than was thine, less frequently invaded, less sharply tormented? With that persuasive and eloquent tongue of thine, how often hast thou saved me from the distraction of worldly discourses, and restored me to my dearly loved silence! For the Lord had given him "a learned tongue," that he might know when he ought to utter speech. So, by the prudence of his answers, and by the grace given him from above, he gave such satisfaction both to his

brethren and to strangers, that I might almost say nobody had ever any need to speak to me when Gerard had first been consulted. He would go to meet visitors, opposing himself as a rampart against their incursions, to prevent them from breaking in upon my leisure. If any there were whom he himself could not satisfy, these he conducted to me, sending the others away contented. What shall I say of his wonderful industry? Or what of his loyalty to his friends? Well he knew both how to gratify his brother, and how to fulfil the duties of charity. Whom did he ever send away empty? For the rich he had counsel, and for the poor relief. Surely *he* did not seek what was his own, who, in order to deliver me from care, was willing that himself should be overwhelmed with cares. For in his profound humility, he hoped to derive more abundant fruit from my leisure than from any studies of his own. Yet he sometimes begged to be removed from his office of procurator, and to be replaced by some other more worthy to fill it. But where was such a one to be found? Nor was he attached to that office (as so often happens) by any inordinate affection, since he discharged its functions from the sole motive of charity; and whereas he laboured more than any other, he received less than any other, so that often, whilst providing others with what they needed, he himself was wanting in many things necessary, such as food and clothing. Hence, when he perceived the approach of death, "O God," he protested, "Thou knowest that, so far as depended on me, I have always desired solitude, to be at leisure to attend to Thee and to myself. But I have been forced to remain in distracting occupations by the fear of Thee, by the will of my brethren, by the duty of obedience,

and especially by my sincere affection for him who is at once my abbot and my brother." Such indeed was the case. Thanks to thee, O my brother, for all the fruit (if there has been any) of my studies in the Lord. Whatever progress I have made myself, and whatever help I may have given to others, all is due to thee. Thou wert overburdened with temporal affairs whilst I, at thy expense, was enjoying repose, or at least occupied with the more sacred duties of the divine service, or with the more profitable employment of instructing my spiritual children. For how could I be otherwise than perfectly at ease within, when I knew that thou wert busying thyself without, as my own right hand, the light of my eyes, my heart and my tongue? And indeed thou wert to me an unwearied hand, and a "simple eye," and a heart full of prudence, and a tongue speaking judgment, as it is written, "The mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom, and his tongue shall speak judgment."

But why have I spoken of his exterior employments, as if Gerard were inexperienced in the interior life, as if he were a stranger to spiritual gifts? Those spiritual persons who knew him, knew also how redolent of the Spirit his words were. His brethren knew how his thoughts and his actions savoured not of the flesh, but were animated all with spiritual fervour. Who was more strict than he in the observance of the Rule? Who more austere in bodily mortification, more rapt and exalted in divine contemplation, or more subtle and profound in discourse than was Gerard? How often in discussion with him have I not learned truths which had hitherto escaped me! And I, who had come as the teacher, went away as the one taught. Do not

be surprised that this has been my experience, since even great and wise men testify that the same thing has happened to themselves in conversation with Gerard. He did not indeed possess book-learning, but he possessed the intelligence which is its source and author, and he also possessed the light of the Holy Spirit. Both in the greatest things and in the least he showed himself equally wise and resourceful. For instance, with regard to building operations, to agriculture, to horticulture, to waterworks, indeed to all the different arts and trades which belong to country life—in all this variety of business was there anything, I ask, to which Gerard's skill and resource were not equal? His universal knowledge of practical affairs enabled him easily to superintend the quarrymen, the workers in wood and iron, the farm-labourers, the gardeners, the shoemakers, and the weavers. Wisest of all in the estimation of each of his brethren, he still looked upon himself as altogether devoid of wisdom. Would to God that many, although less wise than he, were not more deserving of the malediction, "Woe to you that are wise in your own eyes"! I am speaking to persons who are aware of all this. But I might say still more of him, and greater things than what is generally known. However, I will refrain, for he is my flesh and my brother. Yet this I confidently affirm, that to me he was useful in all things and in a degree beyond all others. He made himself useful in little things as in great, in private as in public, both at home and abroad. On him I depended wholly, not without reason, since he was my all. He left to me hardly anything more than the name and the honour of superior, for he did all the work himself. I bore the

title of abbot, but he had the largest share of the solicitudes of government. Deservedly, therefore, did "my spirit rest upon him," to whom it was owing that I could "delight in the Lord," preach the word with freedom, and give myself up to prayer with an easy mind. Yes, to thee, O my brother, to thee I owe a more tranquil peace of mind than my office would permit without thee, sweeter delights in repose, richer results from my preaching, greater devotion at my prayers, more frequent opportunities for reading, a stronger affection of divine love.

Alas! thou hast been taken from me, and with thee all these graces. All my consolations and all my joys have vanished together with thee. Now cares rush in upon me. Now troubles assail me on all sides. Afflictions have surrounded me, finding me abandoned and all alone. For only such companions remained with me after thy departure, and, unassisted, I groan beneath the burden. That burden I must now either sink under or lay aside, since thou has withdrawn the support of thy shoulders. Oh, who will grant me soon to die and follow thee? To die instead of thee I should not ask, as that would be to wrong thee, by delaying thy entrance into glory. But to survive thee, what is it but "labour and sorrow"? So long as I live, I shall live in bitterness, I shall live in sadness. This shall be my sole consolation, that, without respite I shall always be a prey to sorrow and anguish. I will not spare myself. I will myself co-operate in my own chastisement with the hand of the Lord, for it is "the hand of the Lord" that "has touched me." Me, I say, it has touched and smitten, not him, whom it has but beckoned to rest. It has slain me in the act of cutting short his exile. I

say "cutting short his exile," rather than "slaying him," for surely it would not be true to call that a slaying which is rather a transplanting, an exchanging of a mortal for an immortal existence. But that which to him was the portal of life was the stroke of death to me. Indeed, I may truly say it was I who died by his death, not Gerard, who "fell asleep in the Lord." Gush forth, gush forth now, my tears, for he is gone, whose presence heretofore prevented your flowing, by excluding the cause. Open, ye fountains of my unhappy head, and pour yourselves out in rivers of water, if perchance, you may thus suffice to wash away the soil of my sins, whereby I have called down upon me the just anger of heaven. When my tears shall have appeased and consoled the Lord, then, perhaps, I may deserve that He also should grant me a little consolation. But He will do this only on condition that I cease not from weeping, for it is only those who mourn that He has promised shall be comforted. Wherefore, be indulgent towards me, all you that are holy, and let every spiritual person bear with me in my lamentation in the spirit of mildness. Let natural affection rather than custom be considered in judging my sorrow. For we daily see the dead mourning their dead, much lamentation and little fruit. We do not find fault with the grief itself, unless it be immoderate, but with the cause of it. The former is a part of our nature, and the disturbance it produces is the penalty of transgression. But the cause of this grief is often vanity and sin. For, if I mistake not, the world laments only the loss of the glory of the flesh, and of temporal advantages. And they who weep for such things, are worthy themselves

to be wept for. But is this my own case? The emotion of sorrow is the same, indeed; but far different are the motives, far different the intention. For certainly I am not complaining of the loss of any worldly object. I mourn over the removal of a faithful helper over the loss of a trusty counsellor in the things that appertain to God. I lament and grieve for Gerard. The cause of my tears is Gerard, my brother according to the flesh, but more closely related according to the spirit, and the confidant and partner of all my designs.

My soul cleaved to his. We two were made one, less by the ties of flesh and blood than by sameness of sentiment. Connected by the bond of consanguinity, we were still more closely united by our spiritual relationship, by the conformity of our minds, and the harmony of our wills. As we were thus but "one heart and one soul," the sword of death pierced this common soul of him and me,* and dividing it in two, placed one part in heaven, and left the other lying prostrate in the mire of the earth. I, dearest brethren, I am that wretched part, cast prone upon the ground, despoiled of half of myself, and that the more excellent. And will you say to me "weep not"? My very vitals have been torn out, and shall it be said to me, "do not feel"? But I do feel; oh, yes, I feel, because "my strength is not the strength of stones, nor is my

* We find the same fancy in St. Augustine's lament for his friend (*Confess.*, lib. iv. cap. vi.): "It has been well said by some one of his friend, 'he was half of my soul.' I, too, have felt as if my friend's and mine were but one soul in two bodies. And therefore I had a horror of life because I hated to live without half of myself. And perhaps this was also the reason why I feared to die, lest I should thus lose him altogether, whom I so tenderly loved and half of whose soul still survived in me."—(Translator.)

flesh of brass." I feel, most assuredly, and I am in pain, "and my sorrow is continually before me." Certainly, He Who uses the scourge cannot reproach me with hardness and insensibility, as He did them of whom the Prophet complained, saying, "Thou hast struck them and they have not grieved." I have confessed my sorrow and I have not denied it. You may call it carnal. I do not deny that it is human, any more than I deny that I am a man. If this does not content you, I will even allow it to be carnal, for "I am carnal, sold under sin," devoted to death, liable to sufferings and sorrows. I am not, I acknowledge, insensible to pain. The thought of death coming to me or to mine, makes me shudder with horror. And Gerard was mine, surely mine. How could he be other than mine, who was my brother in blood, my son in religion, my father in solicitude, my consort in spirit, my bosom friend in love? He has abandoned me now, and I feel as if I were wounded, aye, wounded unto death,

Forgive me, my children. Rather, because you are my children, compassionate your father's distress. "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends," who know how heavily the hand of the Lord has been laid upon me for my faults. With the rod of His indignation He has stricken me, justly indeed, according to my deserts, but severely, considering my weakness. Surely no one who understands what Gerard was to me, will say it is a light punishment for me to be condemned to live without him. Yet, "I will not contradict the words of the Holy One." I do not find fault with the judgment, by which each of us has received what we severally deserved, he the crown, and I the cross. Or shall it be said that I resist the

judgment because I feel the pain? But to smart under the lash is not the same thing as to rebel against authority, for the former is but human, whilst the latter is an act of impiety. It is human, I say, and necessary to feel pleasure in the society of our friends, and sorrow in their absence. Familiar intercourse, especially between persons very dear to each other, has the effect of binding their hearts together. And this result, produced by mutual love in the friends whilst enjoying each other's company, is revealed by their fear of parting, and by the sorrow they experience when actually separated. I grieve for thee, my best-beloved Gerard, not as if thy lot were pitiable, but only because thou art with me no more. And perhaps for this reason, I ought to grieve not for thee, but only for myself, who am still drinking of the chalice of bitterness. And the grief should be for me alone, because I drink alone, since thou hast no part with me in this cup. I alone have to suffer all the anguish which is accustomed to be shared equally by friends who, loving each other tenderly, are compelled to part.

Would to God I were certain that thou art not lost to me for ever, but only gone on before! Would to God I had assurance that, even though late, yet at length I shall follow thee, whithersoever thou hast gone! I have no doubt at all but that thou art now with those whom, about the middle of thy last night on earth, thou didst invite to praise the Lord, when, with beaming face and exulting voice, to the astonishment of all present, thou didst suddenly cry out in the words of David, "Praise ye the Lord from the heavens; praise ye Him in the high places." For on thee, brother mine, though it was still midnight, the dawn had then already broken,

and thy "night was illuminated as the day." And assuredly that "night was thy light in thy pleasures." I was summoned to witness this miracle, the miracle of a man triumphantly awaiting the approach of death and mocking at its terrors. "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" No, it had not any sting of fear or pain for him, but only an impulse to jubilant song. For he sang as he died and he died as he sang. O death, the mother of sorrows, thou art now become a source of joy! Thou, the enemy of glory, art now forced to subserve the interests of glory! The gate of hell, thou art changed to the portal of heaven! The very pit of perdition, thou art made the means of salvation! And all that accomplished by a sinful mortal! Justly indeed, since thou in thy rashness didst impiously usurp dominion over the just and innocent Man. Thou art dead, O death! Thou hast been caught in that Divine Hook Which thou didst so incautiously swallow, and Whose words we read in the Prophet, "O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy bite." Pierced, I say, with that Divine Hook, thou dost now afford to the faithful who pass through the midst of thee, a broad and pleasant passage into life. It was through thy open jaws that Gerard entered the fatherland, not alone with confidence, but even with joy and with songs of praise. When, therefore, I had reached his bedside, and had heard him completing the psalm with a clear voice, raising his eyes to heaven, he exclaimed, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Then, repeating the same words, with frequent cries of "Father, Father," he turned to me, his countenance radiant, and said, "Oh, what a condescension on the part of God to

become the Father of men! And what glory to men to be the sons and heirs of God! 'For if sons, heirs also.'" So sang he, my brethren, whom we now lament. And I confess that the remembrance of this almost changes my mourning into joy, for when I think of his glory, I all but forget my own misery.

But bitter grief recalls me to myself. Anxious solicitude quickly turns away my attention from that consoling vision, as if awakening me from a light slumber. I will weep, therefore, but only for myself, since reason forbids me to weep for him. I believe, if he were now permitted to hold communication with us, that he would say, "Weep not over me, but weep for yourselves." King David had reason to mourn for his parricidal son, because he knew that for him the exit from the womb of death was for ever blocked by the obstruction of his crime. Good cause had he also to sorrow over Saul and Jonathan, who were both swallowed up together in a common destruction, without any hope of a future deliverance. They shall rise, indeed, but not to life. Or rather, they shall even rise to life, but only in order that, living in everlasting death, they may die the more miserably. Yet I feel some hesitation, and not without cause, about including Jonathan in this sentence of doom. But although I have not the same reasons for my lamentation as King David had for his, I am not in want of others. In the first place I grieve over my own loss and over the loss sustained by the community. I grieve, in the second place, on account of the necessities of the poor, to whom Gerard was as a father. I grieve, thirdly, for the sake of our whole Order and of the religious state in general, which derived no little support and edification from the in-

fluence of thy zeal, the counsels of thy wisdom, and the example of thy life, O my brother. I grieve, lastly, although not over thee, dearest Gerard, yet on account of thee. This, this is the cause of my greatest affliction, my passionate love of thee. And let no man be troublesome to me, telling me that I should not allow myself to be so overcome by natural feelings. For the kind-hearted Samuel was permitted to indulge his sorrow over the reprobate King Saul, and the pious David over the treacherous Absalom, and that, without the least prejudice to their faith, or the least opposition to heaven's appointment. "Absalom, my son!" wailed holy David; "my son, Absalom!" "And behold, a greater than" Absalom "is here." The Saviour Himself, looking upon Jerusalem, and foreseeing the fate that was soon to befall it, "wept over it." And shall not I be suffered to feel my own desolation, which is not future but actually present? Must I remain insensible and irresponsive to the smarting of my fresh and grievous wound? Surely I may weep from pain since Jesus wept from compassion. For at the grave of Lazarus He certainly did not reprove the mourners, nor command them to desist; but, on the contrary, He united His own tears with theirs. "And Jesus wept," says the Evangelist. Those tears of His, most assuredly, betrayed no want of confidence, but only testified to the reality of His Human Nature. For He immediately called upon the dead man, in order to show us that faith suffers no loss from the affection of sorrow.

So neither is my weeping a sign of a weak faith, but only an indication of my condition. From the fact that I cry out with pain on being smitten, it must

not be supposed that I blame Him Who smites me. I only appeal to His compassion, and endeavour as best I can to soften His severity. Hence, though my words are full of grief, they are yet free from murmuring. Have I not acknowledged the perfection of His justice Who, by one compendious sentence, assigned to Gerard the reward, and to me the chastisement due to our respective merits? And still I say, the "sweet and righteous Lord" has done well by us both. "Mercy and judgment I will sing to Thee, O Lord." Let the mercy, which Thou hast shown to Thy servant Gerard, sing to Thee. And let the judgment, under which I groan, sing to Thee also. In the one Thou shalt be praised for Thy goodness, in the other for Thy justice. Or is there praise for goodness only? Yea, and for justice as well. "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment right." Gerard Thou gavest, Gerard Thou hast taken away; and if we lament his removal, we do not forget that he was but a loan. So we feel thankful that we were accounted worthy to have him even for a while. And our unwillingness to lose him is proportionate to the need which we had of him.

But I remember, O Lord, my compact and Thy condescension, "that Thou mayst be justified in Thy words, and mayst overcome when Thou art judged." Last year when we were in Viterbo, in the cause of the Church, Gerard fell ill. His sickness grew more and more serious, until it seemed now that death was at hand. I could by no means reconcile myself to the thought of leaving in a foreign land the companion of my journey, and such a companion; nor would anything content me except to restore him to the com-

munity who had entrusted him to my care, for I knew how much all loved him, who in truth was exceedingly lovable. So I betook myself to prayer, with tears and sighs. And I said to Thee, "Wait, O Lord, wait until we have returned home. When he is restored to his brethren, take him then, if it pleases Thee, and I shall not complain." Thou didst grant my petition. Gerard recovered. We performed the task which Thou gavest us to do, and came back "with exultations, bearing the sheaves" of peace. Then I forgot our agreement, but Thou didst not forget. I am ashamed of these sobbings, which convict me of unfaithfulness. Why should I say more? Thou hast but claimed back what Thou didst lend us. Thou hast but taken what is Thine. But I am now compelled to put an end to my words by the flow of my tears. Do Thou, O Lord, I implore Thee, put an end and a limit to them.

SERMON XXVII

In what sense the Beauty of the Spouse may be compared to the Curtains of Solomon.

"As the curtains of Solomon."

Now that we have discharged the duty, imposed by charity and natural affection, of escorting, so to speak, our friend Gerard on his way home from this land of exile, I purpose to take up again to-day the interrupted work of your edification. For it is an unseemly thing, in my opinion, to prolong our lamentations over one who rejoices, and an unmannerly thing to obtrude our tears on one who is seated at a banquet. And if we mourn for our own misery, we ought to take care that this be not excessive, lest otherwise we should seem to have loved Gerard not so much for his own sake as for the advantages which we derived from his presence. Then, let the thought of our dear one's joy temper the sorrow of the desolate. Let the belief that he is present and united with God render more endurable his absence from ourselves. Relying, therefore, on your prayers, I shall endeavour and do my best to throw light upon that mystery, whatever it is, which I perceive to be wrapped up in those curtains, referred to in illustration of the beauty of the Spouse. It has been touched upon already, if you remember, but left undiscussed. How the Spouse is "black as the tents of Cedar," I have sufficiently examined and explained. But how are we to understand the comparison "beau-

tiful as the curtains of Solomon"? As if, forsooth, Solomon "in all his glory" possessed anything worthy to be compared to the beauty of the Spouse, or to the magnificence of her ornamentation. Were we to say that these mysterious curtains, just as the "tents of Cedar," are likened not to the Spouse's beauty, but to her blackness, the similitude would perhaps be intelligible, and I should not be at a loss for reasons to explain its congruity, as indeed I intend to prove to you later on. But if we suppose that the splendour and glory of some kind of curtains is to be considered as bearing an analogy and a resemblance to the beauty of the Spouse, I certainly have particular need here of the assistance of Him Whose light you have implored, in order that I may be able to fathom this mystery and to unfold it in a manner befitting its dignity. For which of those things, which shine exteriorly, does not appear vile and hideous to a man of sound judgment, when compared with the interior grandeur of even any holy soul? What, I ask, can be found in this world, whose "fashion passeth away," possessing a beauty at all comparable to that of the soul, which, having put off the oldness of the earthly man, has put on the glory of the heavenly, and adorned, not with the vanity of material decorations, but with the magnificent jewels of noble virtues, appears higher and purer than the heavens, more resplendent than the sun? Do not, therefore, look to the earthly Solomon, when you desire to ascertain what those curtains are, of her resemblance to which in loveliness the Spouse is here represented as boasting.

What, then, does she mean by saying, "I am

beautiful as the curtains of Solomon"? These words, my brethren, appear to me to contain a deep and marvellous meaning, if we are allowed to suppose that the reference is not to the historical Solomon, who reigned in Jerusalem, but to Him Who said of Himself, "Behold, a Greater than Solomon is here." For so truly a Solomon is this Solomon of mine, that not only is He called the Peaceful, which is the signification of the word Solomon, but he is even named Peace, since St. Paul tells us that "He is our Peace." With this Solomon, no doubt, something can be found which I need have no hesitation in comparing to the beauty of the Spouse. And with regard to the curtains in particular, observe what we read in the psalm, "Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain*." Surely it was not the earthly and merely human Solomon, wise though he was, and very powerful, that so "stretched out the heavens like a curtain," but rather He, Who, being not so much wise as Wisdom Itself, not only stretched out but even created the heavens. For it is to Him, and not to the other, these words belong, "when He"—namely, God the Father—"prepared the heavens, I was present." Unquestionably the Father had present to Him His Power and His Wisdom, that is to say, His Word, "when He prepared the heavens." And do not imagine that the Word stood by doing nothing, and merely as a spectator, because He says, "I was present" and does not add "I was preparing with Him." Read on a

* In the Douay Version the word "pellis," which in the Canticle is rendered "curtain," is translated "pavilion" in Psalm ciii. But St. Bernard's context requires this word to be taken in the same sense in both places.—(Translator.)

little further, and you will find that addition explicitly made, where He declares, "I was with Him forming all things." He has also told us that "what things soever He (the Father) doth, these the Son also doth in like manner." Consequently, the Word as well as the Father "stretched out the heavens like a curtain." Most beautiful curtain, which with its wide expanse, covers the whole face of the earth as with a canopy, and delights the gaze of mortals with its wonderfully varied ornaments of sun, and moon, and stars! What can be grander than this curtain? What more magnificent than the heavens? Nevertheless, not even these are in any sense comparable to the glory and loveliness of the Spouse. For "the fashion" of such things "passeth away," as being corporeal and perceptible to sense, "for the things which are seen, are temporal, but the things which are not seen, eternal."

The beauty of the Spouse, on the contrary, is something spiritual, and hence only to be discerned by reason. It is also eternal, inasmuch as it is an image of eternity. Her beauty, for instance, comprises charity, and, as you have read, "charity never falleth off." It also comprises justice, and her "justice continueth for ever and ever." Patience, too, because, as it is written, "The patience of the poor shall not perish for ever." What shall I say of her humility, of her voluntary poverty, which also appertains to her beauty? Does not the one merit an eternal kingdom and the other everlasting exaltation? In that beauty is also found "the fear of the Lord, holy, enduring for ever and ever." And what are prudence, and temperance, and fortitude, and all other virtues whatever but pearls, as it were, in the adornment of the Spouse, gleaming with an im-

mortal brightness? I say with an immortal brightness, because that brightness of the virtues is really the seat and support of immortal life. For there is no place at all in the soul for such a never-fading and blissful life except on the foundation and basis of the virtues. Hence the Prophet says to God, Who is the true blessed Life, "Justice and judgment are the preparation of Thy seat." And the Apostle prays "that Christ may dwell," not in every or any manner, but particularly "by faith in your hearts." So also when the Lord was about to sit upon the ass's colt, the disciples laid their garments thereon, signifying that the Saviour or salvation will not rest upon the soul unless her nakedness be covered with the apostolic doctrine and virtues. The Church, therefore, having the promise of future felicity, takes care, meantime, to prepare and adorn herself with "gilded clothing, surrounded with variety," the variety, that is, of graces and virtues, in order that she may be found worthy and capable of the very fulness of grace.

But even to this variety of spiritual beauty, which the Spouse has received in the present life with the first robe, as it were, of the garments of her sanctification, I would by no means compare the splendours of this visible and corporeal firmament, most magnificent though it be, amongst material things, by reason of the splendour and diversity of its luminaries. Yet there is a "heaven of heavens," of which the Psalmist says, "Sing ye to God, Who mounteth above the heaven of heavens to the east." This is the intellectual and spiritual heaven. He "Who made the heavens in understanding," created and established it for ever, and dwells therein Himself. But do not suppose that the love of the Spouse remains

outside this heaven, in which her Beloved abides. For where her treasure is there is her heart also. She therefore feels jealous of those who are privileged to contemplate that Divine Countenance Which she longs to see; and as she cannot as yet share the vision with them, she tries to conform her life to theirs, crying out more by her virtues than by her voice, "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth."

She certainly will not disdain to compare herself to this heaven of heavens. It also, like the other, is stretched out like a curtain, not indeed over extents of corporeal spaces, but in the spiritual affections of pure intelligences. And it is diversified with the works of the great Artificer, as wonderful as they are various. Again, there are in this heaven of heavens distinctions, not of colours * but of glories. For "God indeed hath set some" Angels, others Archangels, others Virtues, others Dominations, others Principalities, others Powers, others still Thrones, still others Cherubim, and others again Seraphim. These are the stars that adorn the heaven of heavens. These constitute the embroidery of this curtain, which is one of those belonging to my Solomon, and indeed is distinguished above all the others by the endless variety of decorations which make up its multiform glory. But this immense curtain contains within itself innumerable others, all equally curtains of Solomon, since every one of its blissful and holy inmates may be truly called in itself a curtain of Solomon. For they are all kind and "stretched out" in charity, extending

* "Colorum." Other readings are "coelorum" (of heavens) and "locorum" (of places).—(Translator.)

even to us. Nor do they begrudge us a share in the glory which they enjoy themselves, but rather desire it for us, and for this reason some of their number are content to associate with us, busying themselves about our interests and taking us under their care. "For are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" Wherefore, just as all these blessed spirits, considered as a collective unity, are called the "heaven of heaven" (*coelum coeli*) in the singular, so, regarded as a multitude of distinct and independent beings, they are named the "heavens of heavens" (*coeli coelorum*) since each angel is a heaven in and by himself, and to each may be applied the words "stretching out the heavens like a curtain." You now understand, I think, what these curtains are which the Spouse is proud to resemble, and to what Solomon they belong.

Let us next consider the glory of her who compares herself to the heavens, and to that heaven which is the more glorious in proportion as it represents the Divine Perfections in a more excellent way. Not unreasonably does she derive a similitude thence whence she has derived her existence. For if she likens herself to the tents of Cedar on account of the body which is drawn from the earth, why should she not boast of an equal resemblance to heaven, by reason of the spirit which is heavenly * in its origin? Especially, when

* "Propter animam quae de coelo est." For two reasons the soul may be said to have come from heaven: both because it has been produced, not from the slime of the earth like the body, but by a direct exercise of the divine creative power, and also because it in a more especial manner has been made to the image and likeness of God. Berengarius fastened upon these

her life bears witness to that celestial parentage, as well as to the dignity of her nature and the nobility of her fatherland. She adores and honours one God, like the angels. She loves Christ above all, as do the angels. Like the angels, she is chaste ; but her chastity, unlike the chastity of the angels, is preserved in the flesh of sin and in a frail body. Lastly, she seeks and relishes only the things that are above where the angels abide, and not the things which are upon the earth. What could be a more evident mark of celestial origin than so to retain the inborn resemblance to the spiritual creation in a world where everything is material ? to exhibit the glory of a heavenly life on earth and in exile ? to live as an angel in a body that is almost bestial ? Effects of this character have for their cause not an earthly, but a divine principle, and clearly indicate the supernal birth of the soul wherein they are manifested. But listen to St. John declaring the same more explicitly : " I, John, saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." And he adds, " And I heard a great voice from the throne saying : Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them." Why, do you ask ? As I believe, in order that He may take to Himself a Bride from amongst men. Strange ! He came for a Spouse

words of St. Bernard and argued against him dilemmatically to this effect : " If the soul comes from heaven, then either it must be said that the body also is of heavenly origin, or else that the soul has existed before its union with the body. To maintain the first is the height of stupidity, to maintain the second is to fall into the error of Origen." As regards the latter point, the Saint expressly teaches elsewhere that the creation of the soul and its union with the body are simultaneous—" Creatur immittendo, et creando immittur."—(Translator.)

yet came not without a Spouse. He sought a Spouse, whilst having a Spouse with Him. Shall we say that there are two Spouses? God forbid! One "is My Spouse," He has told us, "My Dove is but one." But just as He desired to form His different flocks of sheep into one "that there may be one fold and one Shepherd"; so, likewise, in order that there may be one Bridegroom and one Bride, it has pleased Him to unite the Church of men which He has established on earth, to that other Church in heaven, composed of the multitude of angels, which, as a Spouse, has cleaved to Him from the beginning. Therefore, by this her union with the earthly Spouse, the heavenly has not been duplicated but only made perfect. And so she understands what the Bridegroom says of her, "My perfect one is but one." Besides conformity with the will of the same Beloved makes one of the two Spouses here, by similarity of devotion, as it will make them more one hereafter by equality of glory.

So you see, my brethren, that both come from heaven, Jesus, the Bridegroom, and His Bride the New Jerusalem. He, in order to make Himself visible, "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man." But in what form or beauty, or clothed with what splendour are we to suppose that John, the Seer of Patmos, beheld the Spouse descending? Perhaps he recognised her in the multitude of angels, whom he observed "ascending and descending upon the Son of Man"? But it is better to say that he then saw the Spouse, when he saw the Word made flesh, acknowledging the "Two in the one flesh." For when our Most Holy Emmanuel established on earth a school of heavenly

doctrine ; when the visible image of that supernal Jerusalem, " which is our mother," and the " loveliness of her beauty," were revealed to us, as reflected through and in the human life of the Bridegroom, what else did we contemplate but the Spouse in her Beloved, admiring in one and the same Lord of Glory both the " Bridegroom decked with a crown " and the " Bride adorned with her jewels " ? Therefore, He Who descended is the Same Who also ascended, that " no man may ascend into heaven, but He That descended from heaven," one and the same Lord being a Bridegroom in His Head, viz., in His Divinity, and as a Bride in His Body, viz., in His Human Nature. And not in vain did this heavenly Man appear here below, because from earthly men He has made multitudes heavenly like unto Himself, as it is written, " And such as is the heavenly, so also are they that are heavenly." From that time, the life of men on earth has approximated to the life of the angels. Like the celestial and blissful Spouse above, she also, that has been called " from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon," cleaves with chaste affection to her heavenly Bridegroom, to Whom, although not yet, like that other, united by vision, she is nevertheless espoused through faith. This is what God promised by the mouth of His Prophet, Osee, saying, " And I will espouse thee to Me in justice, and judgment, and in mercy, and in commiserations ; and I will espouse thee to Me in faith." Hence, she endeavours to conform herself more and more perfectly to her heavenly Model, learning from Him to be modest and sober, to be chaste and holy, to be patient and compassionate, to be " meek and humble of heart." By the practice of these virtues

she tries, even during her exile here below, to please Him "on Whom the angels desire to look"; so that, whilst she burns with the same ardent desire as these, she may thus prove herself a "fellow-citizen with the saints" and a "domestic of God," a "beloved one," and a Spouse.

Indeed, my brethren, it seems to me that every soul which is animated by such sentiments, is not only heavenly by reason of her origin, but may even herself be justly called a heaven,* on account of her imitation of the life above. For it is then she clearly shows herself to be heaven-sprung, when her "conversation is in heaven." Consequently, each holy soul may be considered as a heaven in herself, wherein the intellect is as the sun, faith as the moon, and the different virtues as the stars. Or perhaps I might call zeal for justice, or fervent charity the sun, and continence the moon. For just as we are told that all the glory of the moon is borrowed from the sun, so continence has no merit, independent of justice and charity. Hence, the Wise Man exclaims, "Oh how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory!" That is to say, with charity. Nor do I think I have erred in calling the virtues the stars of the soul. A little reflection makes manifest the aptness of the image. For as the stars glitter in the night and fade by day, in the same manner, true virtue often lies concealed in the day of prosperity, but shines out resplendent in the night of adversity.

* "'Heaven is My seat,' says the Lord by the mouth of His Prophet; and Solomon tells us that 'the soul of the just is the seat of wisdom.' But the Apostle calls Christ the Wisdom of God. Since, therefore, Wisdom is God, and heaven the seat of God, and the just soul the seat of wisdom, it clearly follows that the just soul is entitled to be called a heaven."—(St. Gregory the Great, Hom. 38 in Evanel—(Translator.)

This occultation of virtue is due to prudence, as its manifestation is enforced by necessity. Therefore, since virtues are stars, the virtuous man may rightly be called a heaven. For surely we are not to suppose that when as we read, God said through His Prophet, "Heaven is My seat," He meant this visible and changeable heaven above us, and not rather that of which the Scriptures more clearly speak elsewhere, telling us that "The soul of the just man is the seat of wisdom." Now, he who understands from the teaching of Christ that God is a Spirit requiring to be adored in spirit, will certainly not hesitate to assign to Him also a spiritual seat. And I would confidently maintain that such a seat is to be assigned Him, not less in the soul of the just man than in the angelic spirit. I am especially confirmed in this view by the Saviour's faithful promise, "We," viz., the Father and Himself, "will come to him," that is, to the holy soul, "and will make Our abode with him." It is, as I think, of the same heaven that the Prophet also spoke when he said, "But thou dwellest in the holy place, the Praise of Israel." And St. Paul evidently refers to it when he prays that "Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts."

Nor should it surprise us, my brethren, that the Lord Jesus delights to dwell in the heaven of the just human soul, which He not only called into being by His omnipotence, as the other spirits, but He fought to acquire it, and He died to redeem it. Hence, after His labour, when He had now attained the object of His desire, He exclaimed, "This is My rest for ever and ever, here will I dwell because I have chosen it." And blessed is that soul to which it is said, "Come My

chosen one, and I will place My throne in thee." But now, "Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me?" Dost thou not think that even thou canst find in thyself a seat for the Lord? But what seat have we in ourselves befitting such glory, suitable to such Majesty? Would to God I were worthy even to "adore in the place where His Feet have stood"! Who will grant me at least to follow faithfully in the footsteps of some holy soul which "He hath chosen for His dwelling"? Yet, oh, that He would deign to anoint my soul, too, with the unction of His mercy, and so to "stretch it out like a curtain," which, when oiled, is easily extended! Then should I also be able to sing, "I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart." And perchance, I might be able to show Him in myself, if not "a large dining-room furnished" where He might recline with His disciples, at least a place "where to rest His Head." At any rate, I shall lift up my eyes from my lowly station to those blessed ones of whom it is said, "I will dwell in them and walk in them."

Oh, how great is the amplitude, how great the merit and the prerogative of that soul which is found worthy to receive and sufficient to contain in herself the presence of the Divinity! What must be her dimensions, since she is required to include spacious recreation-grounds for the Divine Majesty to walk in! Certainly, such a soul does not entangle herself in litigation, or in worldly solicitudes. Neither does she give herself up to the delights of the flesh or the pleasures of the table. There is found no place in her for the ambition to rule, no pride of domination. For the soul that would become a heaven, a dwelling of God, must, in the first place,

be entirely free from all these passions. Otherwise, how could she obey His command, "be still and see that I am God"? But it is also necessary to renounce hatred, and envy, and rancour, "for wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul." It is further requisite that the soul should grow and expand in order to make room in herself for the Divine Immensity. Now, love is the enlargement of the soul, as the Apostle says, "Be enlarged in charity." For although, as a spirit, she does not admit of corporeal expansion, yet, what nature denies her in the material sense, she acquires spiritually through grace. She therefore both increases and expands, but in a manner consonant with her spiritual nature. She increases not in substance but in virtue. She increases also in glory, "and groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord." She increases, lastly, and develops "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ." Consequently, the magnitude of every soul is to be estimated in accordance with the degree of charity which she possesses, so that, the soul, for instance, which has great charity should be regarded as great, and the soul with little charity as little, and the soul possessing no charity, as nothing. Hence the Apostle declares, "If I have not charity, I am nothing." But if a soul begins to have charity, albeit in some very low degree, but so much at any rate as gives the good will to salute her brethren, and those who salute her, I should call that soul not nothing, but next to nothing. because she retains at least this social affection, exhibited and consisting in such an interchange of courtesies. Yet I might ask in the words of the Lord, what more does she do? Neither ample nor great, but

narrow and little, should I therefore esteem a soul of this kind, which I recognised to be so little in charity.

But if she grows and progresses, so that, overstepping the limits of a straitened and ungenerous love, she attains, in perfect liberty of spirit, to the broad plains of spontaneous kindness, and endeavours to stretch out the curtains of her good will, so as to cover all her neighbours, loving each as she loves herself, surely, then, we can no longer justly say to her, "what more dost thou do?" For has she not done much more in making herself so much more ample? Charity, I say, bears such an ample heart that it embraces all within itself, even those whom it recognises as connected with it by no ties of relationship, those to whom it is bound by no hope of future favour, and those to whom it is under no debt of gratitude for benefits already received; for it is subject to no obligations except that of love, whereof the Apostle says, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." But the soul may proceed still further. She may even do violence to the kingdom of charity, and, as a pious invader, prevail so far as to occupy its territories to their uttermost bounds. This she will have accomplished when she understands that not even to her enemies must the bowels of her piety be closed, when she does good to those who hate her, prays for those who persecute and calumniate her, and tries to live in peace even with those who hate peace. Then, without doubt, the breadth of that soul shall be as the breadth of heaven; her height shall be as the height of heaven, and her beauty as the beauty of heaven. And thus shall be fulfilled in her that which is written, "stretching out the heavens like a curtain." In this

heaven of wonderful breadth, height, and beauty, not only will the sovereign, immense and all-glorious Deity condescend to dwell, but He will even walk at large in its wide expanses.

Do you perceive, my brethren, what varieties of heavens the Church contains within her, whilst, in her universality, she is herself an immense heaven, "stretched out from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth"? Then see also, by consequence, to what she is to be compared in this particular, unless perchance you have forgotten the examples I gave you a while ago, of the "heaven of heaven," and the "heavens of heavens." Therefore, after the pattern of that Jerusalem, which is above, and is our mother, this of earth, which is still in exile, has its heavens, viz., its spiritual men, illustrious in their lives and reputations, sound in faith, firm in hope, "stretched out like curtains" in charity, sublime in contemplation. They distil rain, too, these spiritual heavens, but it is the saving rain of the word, just as they thunder in their reproofs and lighten in their miracles. Also, they "shew forth the glory of God"; because "stretched out like curtains" over the whole earth, they exhibit a "law of life and discipline" inscribed in themselves by the finger of God, in order "to give a knowledge of salvation to His people." They publish, moreover, the Gospel of peace, as being the curtains of Solomon, the "Peaceful."

In these spiritual, yet earthly, curtains of holy men, my brethren, you now recognise the image of the supernal, which were described quite recently, in connexion with the adornments of the Bridegroom. You also recognise the queen standing at His right Hand, decorated

with similar, yet inferior ornaments. For she, even "in the place of her sojourn," as well as "in the day of her power," possesses not a little of glory and beauty "in the splendours of the saints." But not like her Beloved is she crowned with the complete and consummated glory of the saints. Still, I might describe the Spouse, too, as perfect and blissful, although only in part. For in part she is yet as the "tents of Cedar." Nevertheless, she is beautiful, both in that part of her which already reigns in bliss, and also in the illustrious men by whose virtues and wisdom she is adorned on earth, as the firmament with its stars. Hence the Prophet Daniel says, "But they that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity."

O humility! O sublimity! A "tent of Cedar," and a sanctuary of God! An earthly habitation, and a heavenly mansion! A house of clay, and a royal palace! A "body of death" and a temple of light! The scorn of the proud and the Bride of Christ! She is "black but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem." For although the labour and the pain of a long exile have darkened her complexion, all the same, she is clothed with the beauty of heaven, and adorned with the "curtains of Solomon." If you are displeased with her blackness, at least admire her loveliness. If you despise her humility, you must respect her sublimity. How prudently and wisely, how discreetly and befittingly has it been arranged that, in the Spouse, abjection and elevation should so counterbalance and compensate each other, "according to the time," that, amidst the vicissitudes of this world, sublimity lifts her up when cast down by misfortune, lest she should faint

in adversity, and humility depresses her elation, lest she should grow vain in prosperity! And thus, both the one and the other, opposed as they are in themselves, are wondrously made to co-operate into good for her, and to subserve her eternal salvation.

So much for the simile by which the Spouse seems to compare her beauty to the curtains of Solomon. It remains now to put before you that other interpretation of the same text, which I mentioned and promised at the beginning of this discourse, namely, to consider both comparisons, as well that of Solomon's curtains as that of the tents of Cedar, as referring to the blackness of the Spouse. I certainly purpose to be faithful to my engagement. But this exposition requires a special sermon to itself, both because the present is already too long, and also in order to give you time for prayer, that you may, as usual, call down a blessing upon what I shall have to say unto the praise and glory of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII

THE CURTAINS OF SOLOMON ARE EXPLAINED IN REFERENCE TO THE BLACKNESS OF THE BRIDEGROOM AND THE BRIDE.

"As the curtains of Solomon."

You remember, I suppose, what, in my opinion, those curtains are to which the Spouse compares her beauty, and to what Solomon they belong, that is, if we wish to refer the simile drawn from them to the illustration and commendation of that beauty. But if we prefer to understand this, as well as the comparison with the tents of Cedar, of the Spouse's blackness, I can think of no other curtains of Solomon, but those which the King used himself whenever it pleased him to dwell in tents. The exterior of such curtains, if indeed there were any, must doubtless have been discoloured and blackened from daily exposure to the sun and from the injurious effects of the frequent rains. Nor were they so exposed without reason, but in order that he who reposed within, decked with his royal ornaments, might be preserved from any stain of defilement. By this similitude, therefore, the Spouse does not deny her blackness, but excuses it. Never shall she disdain any robe which charity forms and the judgment of truth does not condemn. For "who is weak and" she "is not weak? Who is scandalised and" she "is not on fire?" She assumes the swarthiness of compassion in order to cure or to soothe the maladies of

evil passion in others. She grows dark through zeal for brightness, she becomes black in the quest after beauty.

Thus, the blackness of One makes many white, not the blackness caused by sin, but that which results from solicitude. As we read, "It is expedient for you that one Man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." It is expedient that One should be discoloured for the sake of all, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," lest the whole nation should be condemned on account of the blackness of sin; that the Splendour and the Figure of the Substance of the Divinity be shrouded in the form of a servant to save the life of a servant; that the Brightness of Eternal Life should grow dim in the flesh for the purification of the flesh; that He Who is "beautiful above the sons of men" should, in order to enlighten the sons of men, suffer the eclipse of His Passion, the disgrace of the cross, the discoloration of death; and that He should be divested completely of all beauty and comeliness, that so He might win for Himself in the Church a comely and beautiful Spouse, without spot or wrinkle. I recognise King Solomon's curtain. Rather, I embrace Solomon Himself under His black curtain. For even Solomon has blackness, but only in His curtain, that is, in His skin. He is dark exteriorly, dark in His skin, not in His interior, because "all the glory of the King's daughter is within." Within is the White Light of the Divinity, the loveliness of the virtues, the splendour of glory, the purity of innocence. But all this beauty is concealed under the ignoble hue of infirmity. For "His look is, as it were, hidden and despised," whilst He is being "tempted in all things like as we are,

without sin." I recognise the symbol and type of our sin-blackened nature. I recognise those curtains, those garments of skins wherewith our guilty first parents covered their nakedness. For He made Himself black, "taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and in habit found as a man." I recognise under the skin of the kid, which signifies sin, the Hand of Him "Who hath done no sin," and the Neck through which the thought of evil never passed, and therefore "neither was there deceit in His Mouth." I know that thou art of a gentle nature, "meek and humble of heart," of gracious aspect and amiable disposition, for Thou art "anointed with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." How, then, dost Thou now appear rough and hairy like Esau? What means this blackness? And these wrinkles on Thy Brow that should be white and smooth? Whence this hairy covering on Thy Hands? Ah, yes, I understand. They are mine. These hairy Hands signify that Thou hast taken upon Thee the likeness of my sinful flesh. This shagginess I recognise as my own, and as holy Job predicted, in my own skin "I see God, my Saviour."

But it was not Rebecca, but Mary, that clothed this my Jacob, Who was the more deserving to receive a paternal blessing than His type, in proportion as He was born of a holier Mother. And rightly does He appear in my garments, since it is for me that the blessing is obtained, for me the inheritance is solicited. For He has heard His Father promising "Ask of Me and I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession." "Thy inheritance," the Father says, and "Thy possession I will give to Thee." But how canst Thou give Him

what is His already? And why dost thou bid Him to ask? Or how is that His which it is necessary He should ask for? It is, therefore, not for Himself He is to ask, but for me. And it is for this that He has assumed my nature, in order to plead my cause. For, as the Prophet declares, "the chastisement of our peace is upon Him, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "Wherefore," concludes the Apostle, "it behoved Him in all things to be made like to His brethren, that He might become merciful." Hence, "the voice indeed is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." What is heard from Him is His own, but that which is seen in Him is ours. What He speaks is "spirit and life," what He exhibits to our sight is mortality and death. We see one thing and we believe another. Sense reports Him black, but faith discovers Him to be white and beautiful. Black in truth He is, but only to the eyes of the foolish. For to the minds of the faithful He appears wondrously fair and lovely. He is "black but beautiful," black in the estimation of Herod, beautiful in the confession of the Thief and in the faith of the Centurion.

Certainly, His exceeding beauty did not escape the observation of him who exclaimed, "Indeed, this Man was the Son of God." But wherein he discovered that beauty, we have now, my brethren, to ascertain. For if he attended to external appearances, in what respect did the Saviour show Himself beautiful, in what the Son of God? What did He exhibit to the eyes of the spectators except unsightliness and blackness, whilst, hanging between two criminals, with His arms extended on the cross, He became an Object of ridicule to the malignant, and of compassion to the faithful?

He alone excited laughter, Who alone could have excited fear, and Who alone could have demanded honour. How, then, did the Centurion discover the beauty of the Crucified, and the Divine Sonship of Him Who "was reputed with the wicked"? It is neither right nor necessary for me to reply to this question, since the vigilance of the Evangelist has not allowed it to pass unanswered. For thus we read, "And the Centurion, who stood over against Him, seeing that crying out in this manner, He had given up the ghost, said: Indeed, this Man was the Son of God." It was, therefore, at the sound of His voice that he believed. It was the voice, not the Face, that revealed to him the Son of God. For perhaps he was one of those sheep of His, whereof He said, "My sheep hear My voice."

Hearing discovered that which escaped the sense of sight. The eye was imposed upon by the colour, but the truth entered the mind through the avenue of the ear. For the eye pronounced Christ to be weak, unsightly, miserable, a Man condemned to a most ignominious death. But the ear recognised that He was beautiful, that He was the Son of God, not, however, the ear of the Jews, because they were "uncircumcised in ears." With good reason, therefore, did St. Peter cut off the external ear of the servant, in order to open a way for truth, that the truth might emancipate him, that is, might make him free. The Centurion also was uncircumcised, but not in ear, since from one cry of the dying Saviour, he recognised in Him the Lord of Majesty amidst so many evidences of weakness. And as he believed what he did not see, he did not contemn that which met his eye. It was not what he beheld that made him believe, but what he heard,

because "faith cometh by hearing." It were more fitting, indeed, that truth should enter the soul by the upper windows of the eyes. But this, O my soul, is reserved for the next life, when we shall see "face to face." Meantime, let the remedy find its way into our minds through the same aperture as the malady of old; let life follow in the tracks of death; let light travel in the path of darkness; and let the antidote of truth enter by the same door as the poison of the old serpent, and heal the eye, which is "troubled," in order that it may serenely contemplate Him Who is inaccessible to trouble. So let the ear, which was the first gate open to death, be also the first open to life. Let the hearing, which was the means of destroying the sight, be made the means of its restoration; because unless we believe we shall not be able to understand.* Consequently, merit belongs to hearing, and reward to sight. Hence the Psalmist sings, "To my hearing Thou shalt give joy and gladness." For the Beatific Vision is the reward of faithful hearing, because it is by faithful hearing that we merit the Beatific Vision. Again. the Lord says, "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." Now, the eye that is to behold God must first be purified by the faith that "cometh by hearing," as we read, "purifying their hearts by faith."

In the meantime, then, until the sense of sight is fully prepared for its most perfect functions, let the hearing be aroused and exercised in receiving truth. Happy the man of whom Truth Itself bears witness.

* An allusion to the scholastic formula, "credo ut intelligam," or perhaps to Is. vii. 9 (Juxta Sept.), "nisi credideritis non intelligetis."—(Translator).

saying, "At the hearing of the ear he hath obeyed Me!" For I shall then only be worthy to see, if before seeing I shall have been found obedient. Securely shall I gaze upon my Lord, if He has already received the service of my obedience. How blessed was he who said, "The Lord hath opened my ear, and I do not resist, I have not gone back!" Here you have a pattern of voluntary obedience, and also an example of perseverance. For he who does not contradict is prompt to obey; and he has perseverance who turns not back. Both virtues are necessary, since "God loveth a cheerful giver," and "he that shall persevere unto the end he shall be saved." Would that the Lord would open my ear, that the word of truth might enter my heart, and purify my eye, and prepare it for the blissful Vision! Then I, too, might say to God, "Thine Ear hath heard the preparation of my heart." Then might I, too, with His other obedient servants, hear from Him, "And you are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you." For not all who hear are cleansed, but only those that obey. "Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it." Such a heedful hearing is required by Him Who commands, saying, "Hear, O Israel." And it is this hearing of obedience that he offered who said, "Speak, Lord, because Thy servant heareth." The same is promised by the Psalmist, when he says, "I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me."

"Hearken, O daughter, and see." So speaks the Holy Ghost, my brethren, wishing thus to make us understand the order He observes in leading souls to perfection, first instructing the ear and afterwards delighting the vision. Why, then, do you strain your

eyes for the sight of the divine beauty, when you ought rather to be preparing your ears to receive the divine truth? Are you yearning to see Christ? But it is necessary to hear Him first, and to hear of Him, so that when you do see Him, you may be able to say, "As we have heard, so have we seen." Through so narrow and so small an opening as the aperture of the eye you cannot surely hope to take in a glory so immense. But you may do by hearing what is impossible to sight. Being then a sinner, I could not see God when He called, saying, "Adam, where art thou?" Yet I heard Him. But if the hearing be found pious, vigilant and faithful, it will restore the lost vision. Faith will certainly purge the eye "troubled" by impiety; and the eye that has been closed by the sin of insubordination will be opened by the merit of obedience. This the Psalmist acknowledges as having occurred in his own case, when he sings, "By Thy commandments I have had understanding." For the observance of the divine precepts gives back the understanding which had been lost through transgression. And notice in the case of holy Isaac, how in his old age his hearing, as we read, was more perfect than any of the other senses. Dim were the eyes of the Patriarch, unreliable his faculties of taste and touch. Only his hearing continued unimpaired. And what wonder if the ear is percipient of truth, since "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ"? For the word of Christ is truth. "The voice, indeed," said Isaac, "is the voice of Jacob." Nothing more true. "But the hands are the hands of Esau." Nothing more false. Thou art here in error, holy Patriarch. The resemblance of the hands deceives thee. Nor is

there discernment of truth in thy taste, although it is true in its estimate of savour. For how can that faculty be said to pronounce truly, since it judges the food eaten to be venison, which, in reality, is only the flesh of the domestic kids? Much less oughtest thou to look for truth in the testimony of thine eye which perceives nothing at all. There is neither truth in the eye, nor true wisdom. "Woe to you," says the Prophet, "who are wise in your own eyes." Surely that cannot be true wisdom which is thus accursed. It is the "wisdom of this world," which is "foolishness with God."

But good and true wisdom "is drawn out of secret places," as blessed Job believed. Why then seek it outside, in your bodily senses? Wisdom resides in the heart as taste in the palate. Seek not wisdom in the material eye, since flesh and blood do not reveal it, but only the Spirit of God. Neither should you look for it in the taste of the mouth, because "it is not found in the land of them that live in delights," as Job tells us. Nor in the touch of the hand, for the same holy man declares, "If I have kissed my hand with my mouth, which is very great iniquity, and a denial against the Most High God." As I understand it, the hand is thus kissed when wisdom, which is God's gift, is ascribed, not to Him, but to our own merits. Isaac was a wise man, yet he was led astray by his senses. Hearing alone takes hold of the truth, because it alone has perception of the word. Justly, therefore, is the still carnally-minded woman, Magdalen, forbidden to touch the reanimated Flesh of the Word, because she gave more credit to the eye than to the oracle, that is to say, to the sense of the body, than to the word of

God. For she did not believe Him risen, though He had promised to rise, whereas she believed Him dead on the testimony of her senses. Nor did her eye rest until her sight had been satisfied, because she had no consolation from faith, no confidence in the promise of God. But is it not so, that heaven and earth and everything visible to this eye of flesh must pass away and perish, ere one jot or one tittle of all that God has spoken shall be suffered to fall to the ground? And yet she, who found no consolation in the word of the Lord, ceased from her weeping at the vision of her eye, placing greater reliance on experience than on faith. Nevertheless, experience is often deceptive.

She is, therefore, invited to give the preference to the more certain knowledge of faith, which attains to things beyond the reach of the senses, beyond the range of experience. "Do not touch Me," said the risen Saviour. That is to say, "Cease to confide in thy fallacious senses. Rely upon my word. Accustom thyself to being led by the influence of faith. Faith is infallible, it apprehends the invisible, it is a stranger to the poverty of sense. Nay, it even transcends the limits of human reason, the capacity of nature, the bounds of experience. Why ask the eye about objects beyond its possibilities of vision? And why should the hand endeavour to touch that which is altogether above its reach. The knowledge given by either of these faculties is of comparatively little worth. But faith will certainly speak to thee of Me, without detracting aught from My Majesty. Learn to receive with more certainty and to follow with fuller confidence what it shall teach thee. 'Do not touch Me, for I am not yet ascended to My Father.'" As if to say that

when He is ascended, she shall have the permission or the power to touch Him. And indeed that power she shall have, but with her affection, not with her hand; with her will, not with her eye; with faith, not with the senses. "Why," He asks, "dost thou seek to touch Me now, whilst with the bodily sense thou dost estimate the glory of My Resurrection? Knowest thou not that even in the days of My passible life, the eyes of My disciples were unable to bear the glory of My mortal Body, momentarily transfigured. I still condescend, indeed, to the weakness of thy senses, by presenting to thee the form of a servant which thou canst recognise from thy past experience. But My glory 'is become wonderful to' thee; 'it is high' and thou canst 'not reach to it.' Defer, therefore, thy judgment; postpone thy verdict; do not entrust thy senses with so important a decision, but reserve it to faith, which, as comprehending more fully, will pronounce sentence more worthily and with more truth and confidence. For faith, in that deep and mystical breast of hers, comprehends 'what is the breadth and length, and height, and depth' of this glory. What 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man,' *that* faith bears within herself, wrapped round with mystery and preserved under seal.

"She, therefore, may worthily touch Me, who shall behold Me enthroned with the Father, no longer in an humble, but in a heavenly form, in the same Flesh indeed as to substance, but different as to degree of glory. Why wouldst thou touch what as yet is uncomely? Wait that thou mayst touch Me when I am revealed in My perfect beauty. For I, Who am now unprepossessing by comparison, shall be truly beautiful

then. Now I appear imperfect to the faculties of touch and of sight. I appear imperfect to thee, who art thyself imperfect, in that thou dost follow sense in preference to faith. Make thyself beautiful, and then mayst thou touch Me. Thou shalt make thyself beautiful by rendering thyself faithful. Thus beautiful thyself, thou shalt more worthily and more blissfully touch Me in My beauty. Thou shalt touch Me with the hand of faith, with the finger of desire, with the embrace of devotion, with the eye of the intellect. But shall I still be black? God forbid! Thy Beloved shall be beautiful beyond question and beyond compare, for He shall be 'white and ruddy' as being surrounded with roses and lilies of the valley, that is, by the choirs of martyrs and virgins. Nor shall I in the midst of both companies appear alien to either, since I am Myself both a Martyr and a Virgin. For how could I be alien to the white choirs of virgins, being not only a Virgin, but the Son of a virgin, and the Bridegroom of a virgin? Or to the roseate army of martyrs, I, Who am the Motive, the Virtue, the Reward, and the Model of martyrs? When thou art such thyself, then mayst thou touch Me Who am such, and touch Me in such a way.* Then canst thou say, 'My Beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands.' 'Thousands of thousands' are with thy Beloved, 'and ten thousand times a hundred thousand' surround Him, yet nigh Him is there none. Perhaps thou hast need to fear, lest, in seeking Him Whom thou lovest, thou shouldst mistake for Him one of the multitude of His

* "Talem talis taliterque tange." This sentence will give some idea of the Saint's power of condensation, as also of his fondness for alliteration.—(Translator.)

attendants? But no, thou shalt have no hesitation in singling Him out. He shall easily draw thy attention, being 'chosen out of thousands,' and of peerless glory; and thou shalt say, 'This is My Beloved, this Beautiful One, in His robe, walking in the greatness of His strength.' No longer, therefore, shall He walk in the black skin, which up to this had to be presented to the eyes of His enemies, that they might despise Him Whom they were to slay, and now even to the eyes of His friends, that they might recognise Him after His Resurrection. No longer, I say, shall He appear under a black curtain, but in white robes, beautiful not only above the sons of men, but above even the angelic spirits. Why, then, dost thou wish to touch Me, whilst still in this humble habit, this servile form, this contemptible appearance? Touch Me when I manifest Myself all radiant with heavenly beauty, 'crowned with honour and glory,' terrible in the Majesty of My Godhead, yet sweet and mild in My native serenity."

Here, my brethren, we must admire the prudence of the Spouse and the profound wisdom of her words. Under the shade of Solomon's curtains, that is, in the flesh, she seeks the Glory of the Divinity, she seeks Life in death, the summit of honour and majesty in disgrace, and under the black mantle of the Crucified, the whiteness of innocence and the splendour of virtue. For it was thus that those royal curtains, black though they were, and contemptible, preserved under their awning the bright and precious ornaments of an exceedingly wealthy monarch. Wisely does she refrain from despising the blackness of the curtains, perceiving the beauty concealed underneath. But that blackness

was despised by some who knew nothing of the treasure it covered. "For if they had known it," says St. Paul, "they would never have crucified the Lord of Glory." King Herod knew it not, and hence his contempt for Christ. Neither did the Synagogue know it, since she reproached the Saviour with His suffering and His weakness, saying, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save; if He be the King of Israel, let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him." But the Thief, from the cross whereon he was hanging, recognised that hidden beauty of Him Who was also suspended on His cross, and he acknowledged and proclaimed the purity of His innocence. "This Man," said he, "hath done no evil." He also, at the same time, confessed the Glory of His royal Majesty by the prayer, "Remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." This beauty under blackness was likewise detected by the Centurion, who declared the Crucified to be the Son of God, as it is now by the Church, which emulates the blackness in order to participate in the beauty. She is not ashamed either to appear or to be called black, so that she may be able to say to her Beloved, "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me." Yet surely she is but "black as the curtains of Solomon," that is to say, only in her exterior, and not also within. For there is nothing black in the interior of this Solomon of mine. Observe that she does not say, "I am black as Solomon," but only "as the curtains," that is, as the skin "of Solomon," because the blackness of the true Peaceful One is all on the surface. The blackness of guilt shows itself within. Sin discolours the interior before it appears exteriorly to the eye. So it is written, "From the heart come

forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies, these are the things that defile a man." God forbid that blackness of this kind should be found in Solomon! No, such defilement you shall never discover in Him Who is truly called the Peaceful. For He, "Who taketh away the sins of the world," ought Himself to be without sin, in order that He may be found worthy to win peace for sinners, and so may be justly entitled to the name of Solomon.

But there is, besides, the blackness of afflicted penitence, which appears when we conceive a heart-felt sorrow for our sins. I do not think that Solomon will contemn me for this kind of blackness, if voluntarily assumed on account of my transgressions, because "a contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." There is also the blackness of tender compassion, which we exhibit whenever we sympathise with our suffering brethren, as if we were discoloured by our neighbour's misfortune. Neither do I think that this blackness will be displeasing to our Peaceful One, since He Himself condescended to assume it for our sakes, "Who bore our sins in His Body upon the tree." Another kind of blackness is that of persecution. This should be valued as a most beautiful ornament, when borne for the sake of justice and truth. Hence we read that the apostles "went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." And the Lord says: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake." It is in this blackness, most of all, as I think, that the Church glories. It is this she endeavours to copy more eagerly than any other of the black curtains of Solomon.

She has even been promised a participation in it, in the words of Christ, "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."

Therefore the Spouse goes on to say, "Do not consider that I am brown, because the sun hath altered my colour." That is to say, "Do not find fault with me as uncomely because Thou dost not find me fair and blooming under the stress of affliction, nor beautifully tinted, according to human standards of beauty. Why wouldst Thou reproach me with a blackness due to the violence of persecution rather than to the defilement of transgression? Or perhaps by the sun she means the zeal for justice by which she is inflamed and aroused against the malignant, saying with the Psalmist, "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up"; and "My zeal hath made me pine away, because my enemies forgot Thy words"; also, "A fainting hath taken hold of me, because of the wicked that forsake Thy law"; likewise, "Have I not hated them, O Lord, that hated Thee, and pined away because of Thy enemies?" She also carefully follows the advice of the Wise Man, "Hast thou daughters? Shew not thy countenance gay towards them." For herein she is counselled to exhibit not the brightness of serenity, but the darkness of severity to such as are lax and effeminate and haters of discipline. Or again, to be discoloured by the sun may mean to burn with the flame of fraternal charity, like St. Paul, to "weep with them that weep," to be weak with the weak, to be on fire when any is scandalised. Still another interpretation: we may understand the Spouse as saying, "Christ, the Sun of Justice, has discoloured me, because I languish with the love of Him." Such languor destroys in a manner

the natural hue, and causes a swooning of the spirit, so to speak, through the intense ardour of the soul's desires. Hence the Prophet testifies, "I remembered God and was delighted, and was exercised, and my spirit swooned away." Therefore, the ardour of desire, like a burning sun, darkens the complexion of the pilgrim longing for the Vision of Glory, whilst impatience is begotten of disappointment and eagerness of love is tormented by delay. Which of us, my brethren, is so on fire with holy love, that in his yearning to behold Christ, he loathes and leaves aside all the brightness and joy of earthly glory and gratification, protesting to Him in the words of the Prophet Jeremias, "And I have not desired the day of man, Thou knowest," and saying with holy David, "My soul refused to be comforted," that is, she disdained to be brightened with the empty joys of worldly honours. Or, finally, she may have meant this: "The Sun hath darkened my colour by the contrast with His own Divine Splendour. For as I draw nigh to Him I am made more sensible of my own duskiness. I obtain a clearer knowledge of my own blackness, and I despise my ugliness. Yet in other respects I am truly beautiful. Why do you call me black, since I yield only to the Sun in loveliness?" But what follows seems to me to accord better with the interpretation of the blackness as the effect of violence. For the Spouse clearly indicates that she suffered persecution, by adding "The sons of my mother have fought against me." But I shall take this as my text in the morrow's discourse. To-day you must be satisfied with what you have already heard concerning the glory and by the grace of the Bridegroom of the Church, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is God, blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXIX

On Domestic Discord and Fraternal Correction.

"The sons of my mother have fought against me."

"The sons of my mother have fought against me." Annas, and Caiaphas, and Judas Iscariot were sons of the Synagogue; and these fought most fiercely against the daughter of the Synagogue, that is to say, against the Church, in her very infancy, hanging Jesus, her Founder, on the tree of the cross. For God then fulfilled by their means what He had long before predicted through His Prophet, saying, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed." And perhaps that is the voice of the infant Church which we hear in the canticle of Ezechias, "My life is cut off as by a weaver; whilst I was yet but beginning He cut me off." It is, therefore, of those mentioned just now, and of others of the same nation, who are known to have been enemies of the Christian name, that the Spouse here complains, saying, "The sons of my mother have fought against me." And rightly does she call them the sons of her mother, not the sons of her Father, since they had not God for their father, as the Saviour testifies, but were from their father the devil. For they were murderers, just as he was a murderer from the beginning. Hence, she does not say "my brothers" or "the sons of my Father," but "The sons of my mother have fought against me." Otherwise, without this distinction, the Apostle St. Paul might seem to be

included amongst those of whom she makes this complaint, since he also once persecuted the Church. Yet he obtained mercy, because he "did it in ignorance," whilst living in infidelity. And he proved afterwards that he had God for his Father, and thus that he was a brother to the Church, as having the same Father in heaven and the same mother on earth.

But observe, my brethren, how she accuses by name the sons of her mother, and them alone, as if only they are in fault. Yet how much has she not also suffered from aliens! As she says herself by the Prophet David, "Often have they fought against me from my youth"; also, "The wicked have wrought upon my back." Wherefore, then, dost thou complain of none but the sons of thy mother, knowing, as thou dost, that men of different nations have often persecuted thee? It is written, "When thou art invited to the table of a rich man, consider diligently the things that are laid before thee." We, my brethren, are seated at the table of Solomon. Who is more wealthy than Solomon? I speak not of earthly riches, although Solomon has an abundance even of these. But I wish you to consider the mystical table now before us, how richly furnished it is with celestial delicacies. Spiritual and divine is the food placed upon it for our use. Hence we read, "consider diligently the things that are laid before thee, knowing that it behoveth thee also to prepare the like." And so, with all the diligence of which I am capable, I consider what is laid before me and what is meant for my own instruction and admiration in those words of the Spouse. And that which especially arrests my attention is the fact that she mentions expressly and solely the persecutions suffered from those

of the household, passing over in silence the others, so numerous and cruel, which, as we know, she has endured from men of every nation under heaven, from infidels, heretics, and schismatics. I am too well acquainted with the prudence of the Spouse to imagine that such an omission is due to chance or forgetfulness. But, evidently, she laments more particularly what affects her more sensibly, and what she desires to put us more on our guard against. What is that, my brethren? It is the plague of internal and domestic dissension. You have this clearly expressed in the Gospel, by the mouth of the Saviour Himself, where He says, "And a man's enemies shall be they of his own household." You may read the same in the Psalmist, "The man of my peace, in whom I trusted, who eat my bread, hath greatly supplanted me." Also, "For if my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it; and if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hidden myself from him. But thou, a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with me." That is to say, "The wrong done me by thee, my friend and companion, causes me more pain and distress than all that I suffer from others."*

* When he spoke these words, the Saint and his hearers must have had in mind the foul treachery of which he was himself the victim. He had been most basely betrayed by his own trusted secretary, Brother Nicholas. This wolf in sheep's clothing, possessing a counterfeit of the holy Abbot's seal, was in the habit of sending out letters in St. Bernard's name, calculated to injure his reputation. Thus he used to write even to the Popes, calumniating prelates and religious communities, or recommending unworthy persons for ecclesiastical offices. Being at last discovered, he fled from Clairvaux. But as soon as the Saint was dead, the miserable apostate returned

You know who it is that makes this complaint, and of whom.

Acknowledge, then, that the Spouse is complaining of the sons of her mother, with the same sorrow, because in the same Spirit, as David of Achitophel, when she says, "The sons of my mother have fought against me." Hence, she elsewhere makes a similar complaint: "My friends and my neighbours have drawn near and stood against me." Remove far from you, my brethren, this abominable and detestable evil of domestic discord, you who have experienced and do daily experience "how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity," if yet the union of bodies is accompanied by concord of will, and not by the scandal of dissension. Otherwise, the dwelling together shall neither be "pleasant" nor "good," but most bitter and evil. But woe to the man by whom the pleasant bond of unity is broken! Assuredly he shall bear the judgment, be he who he may. Rather let me die than hear any of you truthfully exclaiming, "The sons of my mother have fought against me"! Are you not all sons of this congregation, as if of the same mother, and brothers of each other? What, therefore, can disturb you from outside or sadden you, if all be well within, and you enjoy fraternal concord? For "who is it that can hurt you if you be zealous of good?" Wherefore, "be zealous for the better gifts," that you may prove yourselves zealous of the good.

But charity is of all gifts the most excellent. Surely that gift must be quite incomparable which the Heavenly Bridegroom was so often at pains to recommend to His

to the attack, and by his slanderous stories, endeavoured to asperse a memory everywhere held in highest honour.—(Translator.)

newly-wed Bride, at one time saying, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another"; at another "This is My commandment, that you love one another," and, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another." He also prayed that they might be one, as He and the Father are one. And see if St. Paul, who invites you to "be zealous for the better gifts," does not give charity the first place amongst all, both when he declares it superior to faith and hope and surpassing knowledge, and when, after enumerating the manifold and wonderful gifts of supernal grace, he directs us to a still more excellent way, which he affirms to be none other than charity. But what can be conceived comparable to that which is to be preferred to martyrdom itself, and to a faith strong enough to move mountains? Therefore, I say to you: have peace amongst yourselves, and then whatever may seem to threaten from outside, it shall have no power to frighten you, because it shall have no power to hurt you. On the other hand, no matter how the world may appear to smile upon us, we shall certainly find in that no consolation, if, at the same time, the seed of discord (from which may God preserve us!) is sprouting in our midst. Therefore, my dearly beloved, be at peace with each other. Let no one injure his brother by word or deed, or by any sign. Let no one, exasperated perhaps and surprised by "pusillanimity of spirit and the storm," be compelled to appeal to God against those who have offended and saddened him, and to give utterance to that serious accusation, "The sons of my mother have fought against me."

For by thus sinning against your brother, you sin

against Christ, Who has declared that, "As long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me." And we do not fulfil our duty in this matter by being on our guard against the more serious violations of fraternal charity such as open contumely or bitter reproaches, such also as secret and slanderous whispering. It is not, I say, sufficient to preserve ourselves from the graver faults, viz., those I have just mentioned, and others of a similar nature. We must avoid light transgressions as well. If, indeed, anything can be called light which you presume to do with the will of hurting your brother, since you shall be held guilty of the divine judgment merely for being angry with him. And justly so. For that which we consider light, and therefore lightly commit, will generally appear different to the offended party, because "man looketh on the face and judgeth according to the face," ready to regard a straw as a beam, and to magnify a spark to a furnace. Not all possess that charity which "believeth all things." "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone" to suspect evil rather than to believe good. This is especially the case, where the rule of silence neither allows him who is the cause to offer an explanation, nor the other to lay bare the sore of suspicion from which he suffers, in order that it may be healed. So that the latter is inflamed and his soul succumbs to a secret and deadly wound amidst deep groans of internal anguish. For, completely given up to the disquiet and agitation of anger, he can do nothing else but revolve silently in his mind the injury he fancies has been done him. Prayer is no longer possible to one in this condition. He can neither apply his mind to reading, nor meditate

on anything holy and spiritual. And whilst the vital respiration is thus suspended, so to speak, and the soul, deprived of her proper nourishment, is rapidly approaching death, that soul for which Christ died, what, I ask thee, who art the offender, what is the state, what are the feelings of thine own soul? What relish canst thou find in prayer or in labour, or in any other exercise, whilst Christ is sadly complaining of thee from the breast of the brother whom thou hast aggrieved, saying, "The son of My mother hath fought against Me," and "he 'who took sweet meats together with Me' hath filled Me with bitterness"?

But if thou shouldst say that he ought not to be so perturbed on account of so slight an offence, I answer that the slighter it was the more easily might it have been avoided by thee. And yet, as I have already remarked, I know not how thou canst call slight anything that goes beyond the mere feeling of anger, since even this is matter for judgment, as the Judge Himself declares. What! Surely thou wilt not regard as trivial that which offends Christ and for which thou shalt be brought before the divine tribunal. "It is a fearful thing," says St. Paul, "to fall into the hands of the living God." Therefore, whenever anyone happens to hurt thy feelings, and it is almost impossible that this should not occasionally occur in such communities as ours whose members are thrown so much together, do not immediately hasten, after the manner of worldlings, to retaliate upon the offending brother by an abusive answer. Neither oughtest thou to be, under any pretence of administering correction, so viciously daring, as to transfix with a sharp and blistering word the soul for which Christ refused not to be

fixed on the cross. Nor shouldst thou vent thy anger by inarticulate expressions of resentment, by suppressed mutterings and murmurings, by turning up the nose in disdain, by the laughter of contempt and mockery, or by the frown of reproach or menace. No, but rather let the agitation expire in thine own heart, where it was brought to birth. Let not that passion which carries death be permitted to go abroad lest it should work havoc to some brother's soul. So shalt thou be able to say with the Prophet, "I was troubled and I spoke not."

I am aware, my brethren, that some find a more profound signification in these words, as if they were spoken of "the devil and his angels." For these also were sons of "that Jerusalem which is above, which is our mother." But they fell, and since their fall have not ceased to fight against their sister, the Church. Nor shall I contradict him who may prefer a more benign interpretation, according to which the meaning would be that the spiritual sons of the Church fight against their carnal brothers with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, inflicting on them wounds, not unto death but unto their salvation, and by such onslaughts compelling them to attend to their spiritual interests. Would that the "just man" might "correct me in mercy and reprove me," "striking and healing, killing and making alive," so that, with St. Paul, I, too, might dare to say, "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me"! "Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes," said the Lord, "whilst thou art on the way with him, lest perhaps the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer." A good adversary he, with whom, if I am

in agreement, neither the judge nor the officer shall have a word to say against me. Certainly, my brethren, if I have ever saddened any of you for the sake of your amendment, I do not regret it, because that sadness is unto salvation. And I cannot recall that I have ever done so without feeling great sadness myself, as it is written, "A woman, when she is in labour, hath sorrow." But God forbid that I should any longer think of my anguish, now that I possess the fruit of my pains and see Christ formed in my children! I know not how it is, but it is true nevertheless, that I feel a more tender affection for those whom I have at length restored to spiritual health after and by means of many reprehensions, than for others who have always been strong and able to dispense with such bitter medicine.

Therefore, my brethren, the Church, or the soul that loves God, can say in this sense that the Sun has discoloured her, namely, by sending some of the sons of her mother to fight against her in this salutary way, and to lead her captive to His faith and love, pierced, no doubt, with many of those arrows whereof we read, "Sharp are the arrows of the Mighty," and, "Thy arrows are fastened in me." Hence she goes on to say, "There is no health in my flesh"; so that, being made healthier in spirit, and consequently stronger, through the infirmity of the flesh, she is able to affirm, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," or with the Apostle, "When I am weak, then am I powerful." Do you observe how the weakness of the flesh increases the strength of the spirit and supplies it with new energies? Then be assured of the converse also, that the strength of the flesh produces weakness of the spirit. And what wonder if you increase in power in

proportion as your enemy increases in weakness ? That is, unless you are mad enough to regard as your friend that flesh which ceases not to lust against the spirit. See, therefore, if the holy Psalmist did not act prudently in praying to be savingly pierced with these arrows and to be " fought against," where he says, " Pierce my flesh with Thy fear." An excellent arrow is fear, which transfixes and slays the desires of the flesh, " that the spirit may be saved." And does it not seem to you that he who chastises his own body, and brings it into subjection, is himself assisting the hand that fights against him ?

Another spiritual arrow is the word of God, " living and efficacious, and more piercing than any two-edged sword." Of this the Saviour said, " I came not to send peace but the sword." A most penetrating arrow also is the love of Christ, which not only pierced, but even transpierced Mary's soul, in such a way as to leave no single fibre of that virginal breast unclaimed by charity, causing her to love with her whole heart, with her whole soul, and w th all her strength, so that she might be full of grace. Or it may be said to have transpierced her in the sense that it passed through her and so came to us, in order that of her fulness we might all receive, and that she might become the mother of charity (of which the Father is God, Who is substantial Charity) bringing forth and setting its Tabernacle in the sun. Thus was fulfilled the words of Isaias, " I have given Thee to be the Light of the Gentiles, that Thou mayst be My Salvation, even to the farthest part of the earth." And it was fulfilled through Mary, who brought forth in visible flesh Him Whom she received invisibly, neither from flesh nor with flesh. She, in truth, suffered in her

whole being a great and most delicious wound of love. Happy should I esteem myself, did I but occasionally feel my soul pricked at least with the point of that sword, so that, having received a little wound of charity, I might exclaim, "I am wounded with love." Who will grant me not only to be wounded in this manner, but even to be "fought against," until I have utterly lost both the colour and the concupiscence of that flesh which "lusteth against the spirit"!

If the daughters of this world revile such a soul, taunting it with its pallor and poverty of colour, does it not seem to you, my brethren, that they may be suitably answered in the words, "Do not consider that I am brown, because the sun hath altered my colour"? And if that soul remembers that she has been brought to this happy condition by means of the exhortations and reprehensions of certain servants of Christ, who were "jealous of her with the jealousy of God," will she not be able to add with all sincerity that "The sons of my mother have fought against me"? The sense, therefore, will be, according to what has been said, that the Church, or indeed any soul studious of virtue, utters these words, not in lamentation or complaint, but with joy and thanksgiving, nay, glorying in that, for the name and the love of Christ, she has been accounted worthy to be and to be called discoloured. And this she ascribes, not to any merit of her own, but to the grace and mercy of Him Who prevented her with His inspirations and sent His preachers to instruct and encourage her. For how could she believe "without a preacher"? And "how could they preach unless they were sent?" Without indignation, but not without gratitude, she declares that the sons of her mother have

fought against her. Hence she adds, "They have made me keeper in the vineyards." If these words be "spiritually examined," I believe it will appear that they express no discontent or ill-feeling, but savour of something more excellent. But before presuming to address ourselves to this investigation, since "the place is holy," we must, with the customary prayers, conciliate and so consult that Holy Spirit Who "searcheth the deep things of God"; or certainly the "Only-Begotten, Who is in the bosom of the Father," the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXX

On the Mystical Vineyards, and concerning the Prudence of the Flesh.

"They have made me keeper in the vineyards; my vineyard I have not kept."

"They have made me keeper in the vineyards." Who? Is it they of whom thou hast just been saying that they fought against thee? Attend, my brethren, and see if she does not now confess that the authors of her suffering have been also the cause of her advancement. Nor should this surprise us, whenever it happens that the motive of their fighting against her is the desire of her amendment. For who does not know that many are often fought against from motives of love and to their own advantage? How many do we daily see going forward to better things, elevated to higher things, on account of the charitable onslaughts of their superiors! This being evident enough, let me now show, if I can, how even when the sons of her mother have fought against the Church, and that, not with a view to her advantage, but from a spirit of enmity, yet their opposition, far from being hurtful, on the contrary has been profitable to her. For we experience a peculiar pleasure, whenever they, who intend our hurt, subserve our interests against their will. The interpretation just given embraces both these senses, because there have not been wanting to the Church either ill-disposed or well-disposed opponents,

fighting against her from opposite motives. But she has derived benefit from all. She boasts of having profited so much from the sufferings caused her by her antagonists, that instead of the one vineyard which they seemed to have taken from her, she now has the joy of being set over many. "Those who fought against me and my vineyard," she seems to say, "and who cried 'Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof,' have done me the service of enabling me to exchange one vineyard for many." This is the meaning of the words added, "My vineyard I have not kept." As if she wanted to explain how it happened that she is now appointed keeper, not of one, but of many vineyards. Such, I take it, is the literal sense of the text.

But if we take these words of the Spouse in their obvious signification, content with the meaning which appears to lie upon the surface, we shall imagine ourselves reading in the Holy Scriptures of those material and earthly vineyards, which, as we see, daily receive of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth wherewith to produce the wine that ministers to luxury. And thus we shall seem to have extracted from the inspired utterance, so holy and so divine, nothing, I do not say worthy of the immaculate Bride of Christ, but even befitting any ordinary bride of any ordinary bridegroom. For what is there in common between spouses and the keepers of vineyards? And even granting that there are some points of agreement, how shall we show that the Church has ever been appointed to the guardianship of vineyards? "Doth God take care for" vineyards? But if we adopt a spiritual interpretation, and understand the vineyards to mean the different churches, that is, the different faithful

peoples, according to the words of Isaias, "The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel," then perhaps we shall begin to see clearly how it is no dishonour to the Spouse to be appointed "keeper in the vineyards."

This even appears to me to contain no unimportant prerogative. And you, my brethren, will be of the same opinion if you take the trouble to consider carefully how the Church extended her territory into such spacious vineyards throughout the whole world, from that day on which the sons of her mother fought against her at Jerusalem, and thrust her out, together with her new plantation. I speak of the "multitude of believers," who, as we read, "had but one heart and one soul." And that primitive plantation is the vineyard which the Spouse acknowledges she has not kept ; but "it shall not be reputed as folly unto her." For it was not so rooted out of Jerusalem as not to be planted elsewhere, and "let to other husbandmen that should render the fruit in due season." Manifestly, then, it perished not, but peregrinated. It even increased and extended, as having a blessing from the Lord. Then, lift up your eyes, and see whether or not "the shadow of it covered the hills, and the branches thereof the cedars of God" ; whether or not "it stretched forth its branches unto the sea, and its boughs unto the river." And no wonder. For it is "God's husbandry, God's building." It is He Who fertilises it, propagates it, prunes and purges it, "that it may bring forth more fruit." When shall that, which His Right Hand has planted, be deprived of care and cultivation? Certainly, the vineyard where the Lord is the Vine, His apostles the branches, and His Father the Husbandman, shall never be allowed to

suffer from neglect. Planted in faith, rooted in charity, purged with the hoe of discipline, fertilised with the tears of penitence, watered with the word of preaching, it shall thus abound with the wine, not of luxury, but of gladness, the wine which produces all manner of spiritual pleasure, without any uprisings of carnal passion. This assuredly is the wine which "rejoiceth the heart of man," of which, no doubt, even the angels drink with delight. For such is their thirst for the salvation of men that the conversion and the penance of sinners are to them a new source of joy. The wine they love best are the tears of contrition, because in these tears they discover the very odour of life, the relish of grace, the flavour of forgiveness, the joy of reconciliation, the health of reviving innocence, and the sweetness and peace of a tranquillised conscience.

Therefore, from that one vineyard, which appeared to have been destroyed by the tempest of savage persecution, how many others have been propagated and have flourished throughout the world! And in all these the Spouse has been made the keeper, so that she may not grieve for not having kept her first. Be comforted, O daughter of Sion! If "blindness in part hath happened in Israel," what dost thou lose thereby? Admire the mystery; but do not be discouraged at the loss. Widen thy bosom, and gather in the "fulness of the gentiles." Say to the cities of Juda, "To you it behoved us first to preach the word of God; but because you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we turn to the gentiles." God indeed proposed to Moses that if he would consent to dismiss the prevaricating people and to leave them exposed to the divine vengeance, he would himself become the father

of a great nation. But the holy Lawgiver refused. Why? On account of the exceeding love which held him strongly bound to that people, and because he sought not the things that were his own, but the honour of God, and the profit of many. So great was the charity of this man of God.

It seems to me, however, that, by a secret dispensation, this destiny, on account of its greatness, was providentially reserved to the Spouse, so that she, and not Moses, might grow into a mighty people. For it would not be right for the friend of the Bridegroom to snatch away the blessing that belonged to the Bride. Therefore, not to Moses, but to the newly-wed Bride, was it said, "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." She, I say, was certainly sent to grow into a great nation. Could she, indeed, have been destined to expand into a greater than the whole? And as she came bearing peace and offering grace, the whole world readily yielded to her sway. But not as grace, so also the law. With how great a difference of aspect the sweetness of the former and the austerity of the latter present themselves to the conscience of each! Surely no one can regard with the same sentiments that which condemns and that which consoles, that which holds to account and that which pardons, that which punishes with severity and that which embraces with love. We have not an equal welcome for the shadow and for the light, for wrath and for peace, for judgment and for mercy, for the figure and for the substance, for the rod and for the inheritance, for the curb and for the kiss. Heavy are the hands of Moses, as Aaron and Hur

can bear witness."* Heavy, too, is the yoke of the law, according to the testimony of the apostles, who declared that neither themselves nor their fathers could bear it. A heavy burden and a light reward, since it is the earth that is promised! Therefore Moses was not destined to grow into a great people. But thou, O mother Church, "having the promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come," dost easily win acceptance from all, by reason of thy twofold offer of a sweet yoke here and a supernal kingdom hereafter. Driven forth from Jerusalem, thou art received by the world, because thy promises are more attractive than thy laws are repelling. Why dost thou still lament the loss of a single vineyard, for which thou hast been so superabundantly compensated? "Because thou wast forsaken, and hated, and there was none that passed through thee," saith the Lord, by His Prophet Isaias, "I will make thee to be an everlasting glory, a joy unto generation and generation; and thou shalt suck the milk of the gentiles, and thou shalt be nursed with the milk of kings; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." It is in this sense, therefore, the Spouse declares that she has been made keeper in the vineyards, and that she has not kept her vineyard.

Whenever I read these words, my brethren, I am wont to reprove myself for undertaking the charge of other souls, who am not able to take care of my own. For I take vineyards as signifying souls. If this

* "And Moses's hands were heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands on both sides" (Exodus xvii. 12).—(Translator.)

interpretation approves itself to you, consider whether I may not also and consequentially regard faith as the vine, the virtues as the branches, good works as the grapes, and devotion as the wine. For as the branches cannot be without the vine, so neither can the virtues exist without faith. "Without faith," says St. Paul, "it is impossible to please God," and perhaps impossible to avoid displeasing Him; "for all that is not of faith is sin," as St. Paul teaches.* Therefore, those who "made me keeper in the vineyards" should have considered this, viz., how I had kept my own. But, alas! how long a time it lay neglected, forsaken, and reduced to a wilderness! Certainly, no wine was produced in it, the branches of virtue having withered on the barren stock of faith. For faith was still there, but dead. How could it be otherwise without works? Such was I when living in the world. After my conversion to the Lord, I confess that I began to keep my vineyard somewhat better, yet still not as I ought. For who is sufficient for this? Not even the holy Psalmist, since he declares that "Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it." To what snares I remember to have even then exposed myself, snares set by him, whose practice it is "to shoot in secret the undefiled"! How much of the produce was carried off from the vineyard of my soul by various cunning artifices, at that very time when I began to apply myself with greater vigilance to the keeping and the

* The holy Preacher does not mean that every action not proceeding from a motive of faith is thereby sinful—the sense in which Michael Baius understood the words of St. Paul, and which was condemned by Pope St. Pius V. He simply says that where faith is absent it is morally impossible to avoid displeasing God by sin.—(Translator.)

caring of it! How many clusters of the excellent grapes of good works were either blighted by anger, lost by boasting, or begrimed with the smoke of vainglory! How many temptations I endured from gluttony, from the spirit of sloth, "from pusillanimity of spirit and the storm"! Such was I then. And, nevertheless, they "made me keeper in the vineyards," not considering what I was doing or had done with my own, nor attending to the master, St. Paul, who censured their conduct with the words, "But if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?"

I am amazed, my brethren, at the audacity of some, who, as we see, can gather nothing in their own vineyards but "thorns and briers," and who yet have the daring to intrude themselves into the vineyards of the Lord. No keepers, no husbandmen they, but "thieves and robbers." Let us say no more about them. But alas for me even now, because of the danger to my vineyard! Nay, the danger is now greater than ever before, because, having to watch over many, I am compelled to be less diligent and less solicitous with regard to my own. I am not permitted to "make a hedge round about it" nor to "dig in it a press." Alas! "the hedge thereof" is "broken down, so that all who pass by the way do pluck it"! It lies exposed to sadness; it is open to anger and to impatience. The busy "little foxes" of "present necessities" lay it waste. Anxieties, suspicions, and solicitudes rush in upon it from every side. Rarely has it an hour's respite from wrangling crowds and vexatious disputes. I have no power to prevent, no means of avoiding such invasions. I have not so much as time to pray. With what rain

of tears shall I be able to irrigate "the sterility of my soul"? I meant to say "the sterility of my vineyard," but the familiar words of the psalm slipped from my tongue. However, the sense is the same. Nor do I regret a mistake which reminds me that the language I am using is figurative, and that there is question here, not of a material vineyard, but of a spiritual soul. Therefore understand "soul" when you hear "vineyard." For the sterility of the former is bewailed under the image and name of the latter. Therefore, with what tears, I ask, shall I irrigate the sterility of my vineyard? All its branches are withered "through poverty." They hang without fruit, because of the lack of moisture. O good Jesus! Thou knowest what faggots of dry twigs I make of them and burn in daily sacrifice to Thee with the fire of a contrite heart. Let "an afflicted spirit" be a sacrifice to Thee, I implore. "A contrite and humbled heart, O God," do "not despise."

Thus have I, my brethren, according to my imperfection, applied my present text to myself. But perfect will the man have to be who can say in a different sense, "My vineyard I have not kept." I mean, in that sense in which the Saviour says in the Gospel, "He that shall lose his life for Me, shall find it." He is truly qualified and worthy to be made "keeper in the vineyards," who is not turned aside or prevented by the care of his own vineyard from diligence and solicitude with regard to those of his brethren which may be committed to his charge; because he seeks not the things that are his own, nor what is profitable to himself, "but to many." For this reason, doubtless, St. Peter was made keeper in the many

vineyards which were of the Circumcision, because he was a man prepared "to go to prison and to death." Thus he showed how little he was held captive by the love of his own vineyard, viz., of his own interests, in such a way as not to be able to look after those others entrusted to his care. With good reason was St. Paul also made keeper of such a forest of vineyards amongst the gentiles. For neither was he found over-anxious in the care of his own. So far from it, indeed, that he was "ready not only to be bound, but to die also in Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." For, as he said elsewhere, "I fear none of these things, neither do I count my life more precious than myself." Excellent valuator, who judges nothing of all that belongs to him to be preferable to himself!

Yet how many have rated of more worth than their own salvation a little of that vile thing we call money! St. Paul would not give such a preference even to his life. "Neither," says he, "do I count my life more precious than myself." Dost thou, therefore, O Paul, make a distinction between thy life and thyself? Justly couldst thou declare thyself to be of more value than anything that is thine. But how is thy life not rather thyself than thine? I take it, my brethren, that when he said this, the Apostle was "walking in the spirit" and mentally "consenting to the law of God, that it is good." Therefore, he deemed it right to designate his mind, as his principal and noblest part, by the name of "self" rather than by any other title. The remaining (sensitive) part of his soul, which is evidently of an inferior nature and is wedded to the lower and baser essence, that is, to the body, not only by the office of imparting to it life and feeling, but also by the

instinct to foster and nourish it—this sensual and carnal element, I say, St. Paul, as a spiritual man, considered unworthy to be called "self." He judged it better to reckon it amongst the things that belonged to him, than to speak of it as if it adequately represented his personality. "When I speak of myself," he seems to say, "think of that which is most excellent in me, and in which I stand by the grace of God, namely, my mind and reason. But when I talk of my life, I mean the inferior part of my soul which is employed in animating the body, and constitutes with it the principle of concupiscence. That, I confess, I once made myself to be, but now I do so no longer. For I do not now walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit. 'I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.' It is not I that live according to the law of my members, but it is I that live according to the law of my mind. And what if, even still, the inferior part of my soul lusts after the things of the flesh? 'It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.' And hence, not me, but mine, should I call that in me which still savours of the flesh, and which is nothing else than my sensitive life or soul." For in truth, her carnal affection is a part of the soul, as is also the life which she communicates to the body. This life of his sensitive soul, then, is the life or soul which St. Paul despises in comparison with himself, being "ready not only to be bound, but to die also in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus," and so to lose his life, according to the counsel of Christ.

Do you also, my brethren, give up your own wills, completely renounce all that gratifies the body, crucify your "flesh with the vices and concupiscences" thereof, and "mortify your members which are upon the earth."

So shall you prove yourselves imitators of the Apostle, because, like him, you will not have counted your lives more precious than yourselves. So shall you prove yourselves to be disciples of Christ, by losing your lives in this salutary way, as He recommends. And truly it is a more prudent course to lose it in order to save than to save it in order to lose it. "For, whosoever will save his life shall lose it." What have you to say to this, you who are so fastidious with regard to your meals, so careless about your morals? Hippocrates and his disciples teach us to save our lives in this world. Christ and His apostles command us to lose them. Which of the two do you select for your master? But he makes it plain what leader he follows who brings forward such objections as these to the food provided for him by his superiors: "That is bad for the eyes, that causes headache, this injures the breast, that disorders the stomach." We may presume that each person speaks according to what he has learned from his master. Now, I ask, have you found such distinctions of meats in the writings of the prophets or apostles? Assuredly, it was flesh and blood, and not the Spirit of the Father, that revealed to you this wisdom. For it is the wisdom of the flesh, and hear what our spiritual physicians think of it. "The wisdom of the flesh," they tell us, "is death." Also, "the wisdom of the flesh is the enemy of God." Ought I to have proposed to you the doctrine of Hippocrates, or of Galenus, or that of the school of Epicurus, instead of the Gospel truth? *

* Hippocrates (460–361 B.C.), a native of Cos, has been called the Father of medical science. Instead of the superstitious practices and jugglery in wh ch the healing art consisted before his time, he recommended two simple rules, viz., to study the

But I am a disciple of Christ, and I am addressing Christians. Therefore, I should have sinned if I introduced any teaching foreign to the Gospel. Epicurus makes sensual enjoyment the supreme good. Hippocrates prefers a good condition of bodily health. But my Master preaches the contempt of both the one and the other of these things. Those philosophers seek with all diligence, and exhort us to seek, for the means of sustaining or of making pleasant the soul's life in the body, the very thing which, according to the teaching of the Saviour, we ought to be prepared to lose.

symptoms of each malady, and to "follow nature." He was the first to recognise the importance of well-regulated diet as a remedy.

Claudius Gallenus, born at Pergamos, A.D. 130, was also a distinguished physician. His cures were so wonderful that they were attributed to magic. He is said to have written no fewer than 300 books on various subjects connected with his profession. His death occurred A.D. 200 at Rome, where he had been held in the highest esteem by the Emperor Marcus Aurelius.

Epicurus (341–270 B.C.), a native of Samos, was a materialistic philosopher, and the Founder of the system which bears his name. Philosophy he defined to be the art of making life happy—that is, the present life, for he had no faith in a future. And since a happy life means a pleasant life, he recommends us to aim at securing the maximum of pleasure with the minimum of pain. For this it is necessary to restrain our desires within the limits of possible gratification. By pleasure Epicurus does not mean, as he is so often represented to mean, bodily satisfaction alone, nor even chiefly. In his system the highest place is given to intellectual enjoyment or mental repose, to which everything else is to be subordinated. And if he counsels indulgence of desires, it is with moderation and lest unsatisfied appetites should disturb the mind's tranquillity. The system of gross sensualism, frequently confounded with epicureanism, differs widely from the principles laid down by the Sage of Samos, and is in reality the Hedonism of Aristippus, who flourished in the latter half of the fifth century, B.C. —(Translator.)

What else, my brethren, sounded in our ears from the school of Christ when it was just now proclaimed that "He who loveth his life shall lose it"? He shall lose it, the Lord says, either by laying it down, as a martyr, or by afflicting it, as a penitent. Although it is a kind of martyrdom to "mortify by the spirit the deeds of the flesh," a martyrdom less cruel indeed in its terrors than that which dismembers the body with violence, yet more painful by reason of its duration. Do you not perceive that these words of my Divine Master condemn the wisdom of the flesh, whereby we are relaxed in the luxury of sensual pleasure, or we devote excessive attention even to the preservation of our bodily health? That it is not true wisdom which leads to luxury you surely must have learned from holy Job, where he tells us that such wisdom "is not found in the land of them that live in delights." But he who discovers it cries out, "I loved her above health and beauty." And if wisdom is to be preferred to health and beauty, how much more to sensuality and turpitude? But what will it avail us to abstain from the pleasures of the flesh, if we make it our daily engrossing care to study the diversities of constitutions and the distinctive properties of the various kinds of food? "Pulse," thou complainest, "produces flatulency, cheese causes indigestion, milk gives me headache, my chest will not suffer me to drink cold water, cabbage makes me melancholy, I always feel choleric after onions, fish from the lake or from muddy water does not agree with my constitution." What! In all rivers, fields, gardens, cellars, thou canst find scarcely anything fit to be thy food!

Remember, I pray thee, that thou dost belong, not to

the medical, but to the monastic profession; and that thou shalt be judged by thy fidelity to thy religious engagements, not in accordance with the state of thy bodily health. Have mercy, I beg of thee, first, on thy own peace of mind, then on those who have the laborious office of ministering to thy taste. Be kind to the oppressed community. Be kind to conscience. I say "to conscience," not meaning thine, but thy brother's, the conscience of him, namely, who, sitting beside thee, partakes of what is set before him, and feels inclined to murmur at thy singular mode of fasting. For he is scandalised either at thy detestable superstition, or at the hardness which he may be tempted to impute to him who has the duty of providing for thee. Thy singularity, I repeat, is a cause of scandal to thy brother, who will either judge thee to be fastidious, when he sees thee abstaining from the common food, and seeking for superfluities, or certainly he will accuse me of cruelty, because I do not make the necessary provision for thy sustenance. Vainly do some seek to flatter their delicacy with the example of St. Paul, who tells his disciple not to drink water, but to use a little wine for his "stomach's sake" and his "frequent infirmities." For, in the first place, they ought to take notice that the Apostle is not here recommending such a drink for himself, and that the disciple has not asked it for himself. In the second place, it should be observed that the prescription is not for a monk but for a bishop, and a bishop whose life was very necessary to the Church, then so young and tender. This was St. Timothy. Give me another St. Timothy, and I will offer him gold to eat and balsam to drink. But it is thou that dispensest thyself, and treatest thyself

with such tenderness. It makes me suspicious, I confess, to see thee thus indulgent to thyself. And I feel apprehensive lest thou shouldst be deceived by the wisdom of the flesh, masquerading under the name and colour of discretion. At any rate, as thou art so pleased to have the Apostle's authority for drinking wine, I would remind thee, lest thou shouldst forget, that St. Paul uses the adjective "little." But enough of this. Let us now return to the Spouse. And let us learn from her not to keep our own vineyards but to lose them for the profit of others. This is especially necessary for superiors, who manifestly have been made "keepers in the vineyards" of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXI

On the various Visions of God.

" O Thou, Whom my soul loveth, show me where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day."

" Show me, O Thou, Whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day." The Divine Word, the Bridegroom of our souls, often reveals Himself, my brethren, to fervent spirits, but not always under the same form. Why so? No doubt because they do not yet see Him " as He is." For this vision is fixed and immutable, as fixed and immutable as the Form of the Divinity Which is its Object. It simply is, suffering no change from the future to the present, nor from the present to the past. Take away " was " and " shall be " and where now is there any room for " change or shadow of alteration " ? But whatever exists in such a way that it ceases not to pass from that which it has been, and to tend to that which it shall be, by an uninterrupted process of mutation, has indeed a passage through an indivisible *nunc* of actual being, but certainly never is.* For how can we say that that is which " never continueth in the same state " ? Therefore that alone truly is which can neither be separated from itself as it has been by alteration, nor effaced by itself as in the future it shall be, but alone invincibly, unchangeably is, and remains ever that which it is.† Its present has co-existed with the

* Cf. St. Augustine, *Confess.*, lib. xi. cap. xiv.—(Translator.)

† " Solum proinde vere est quod nec a fuit praecidit ur, nec ab erit expungitur, sed solum atque inexpugnable remanet ei est, et manet quod est." Passages like this, numerous with St. Bernard, are the despair of the renderer.—(Translator.)

whole of the unbeginning past, and shall co-exist with the whole of the unending future. In this way does it vindicate for itself true being, that is to say, uncreated, interminable, immutable being. When, therefore, He Who is such, rather I should say, Who being infinite, cannot be described as such or such at all—when He is seen as He is, the vision must of necessity be abiding, as subject to no vicissitude. And thus to all who enjoy that sight, the one penny of the Gospel shall have been paid in the one same vision which is offered to all. For as the Object seen is immutable in Itself, It must appear without variation to all those who behold It. And they who contemplate It can wish to behold nothing more desirable or beautiful, nothing more capable of ravishing their hearts. When, therefore, shall that eager appetite give place to satiety, or that sweetness lose its savour, or that truth be found deceptive, or that eternity fall short and fail? But if both the vision itself and the soul's delight in it shall endure for evermore, surely that is the very consummation of beatitude. For since, on the one hand, the contemplation of the Divine Beauty is all-sufficing and eternal, nothing can ever be wanting to those who enjoy it; and on the other, as their love also is everlasting they can never grow weary of what they behold.

But, my brethren, this vision is not for the present life. It is reserved for the next, and for them only who can say, "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is." Now, indeed, He appears to whom He pleases and as He pleases, but not as He is. No sage, no saint, no prophet can see Him as He is, or, at least, could see Him so, whilst clothed in this mortal flesh. But they who are accounted worthy shall enjoy that vision of

Him in the immortal body of the future. In the meantime, therefore, He is seen, not as He is, but in the way He wills. So it is, indeed, even with that great luminary, I mean the material sun, which daily rises upon us. For it is never seen as it is in itself, but only by the light which it communicates to the air, for instance, or to the mountain, or to the wall. And we could not see it at all, if the light of our bodies, viz., the eye, did not bear a certain resemblance in its natural purity and clearness to the solar radiance. For no other bodily member is sensitive to light, which is doubtless due to their lack of any such affinity. But even the eye itself, when "troubled," is unable to perceive the light, because, namely, it has lost the similitude necessary thereto. Therefore, the same faculty which when "troubled," or clouded, cannot see the bright sun as having no likeness to it, may yet behold it, when rendered bright itself, on account of this resemblance. And it is evident that, were the eye possessed of a purity equal to the purity of the sun, it would be able, by reason of such perfect resemblance, to contemplate with undazzled gaze that luminous body as it is in its meridian splendour. In the same way, the Divine Sun of Justice, "Who enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world," can be seen by the soul that is enlightened, according to the degree in which He enlightens her, because of the partial resemblance between them. Nevertheless, He cannot yet be seen as He is in Himself, for the reason that the similarity is not yet perfect. Hence, the Psalmist exhorts us, saying, "Come ye to Him and be enlightened and your faces shall not be confounded." Thus shall it be, no doubt, if only we are enlightened as much as is needful, so that "beholding the glory of the Lord with open

face, we are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Consequently, we must "come to Him," not, mark you, intrude ourselves boldly upon Him, lest the irreverent "searcher of majesty" should be "overwhelmed by glory." Not from place to place must we advance towards Him, but by a progress "from glory to glory," and this not the glory of the flesh, but of the Spirit: "as by the Spirit of the Lord." Manifestly, I say, it is not by our own spirit that this advance is to be made, but by the Spirit of the Lord. Although it must indeed be accomplished *in* our own spirit. Therefore, each of us draws nearer to God in proportion as he increases in this spiritual glory or purity. But he who has attained to perfect purity has arrived at the very presence of God. Furthermore, for those who have already reached that divine presence, to see Him as He is is the same thing as to be as He is, and no longer to be confounded because of any dissimilitude. But such happiness belongs, as I have said, to the life to come. In the meantine, this marvellous variety of forms, this infinitude of beautiful kinds in creation, what are they but so many rays, so to speak, from the Sun of the Divinity, showing indeed that He Who is their source, truly *is*, but not fully declaring *what* He is? Hence we only see *what proceeds from Him*, not His own Divine Self. But beholding all the works of His hands, although Himself we cannot see, we still feel assured that He truly exists, and that we have a duty to seek Him out. And grace shall not be wanting to the honest inquirer, nor shall ignorance excuse the slothful and negligent. This mode of vision is common to all. It is within the competence of every

one who has attained the use of reason, as St. Paul testifies, "to see clearly the invisible things of God, being understood by the things that are made."

Another way of vision is that whereby the fathers were often graciously admitted to delightful familiarity with God as present, although not even they were privileged to see Him as He is in Himself, but only as He condescended to appear. Neither did He show Himself in the same form to all, but, as the Apostle speaks, "at sundry times and in divers manners," although one in Himself. For "the Lord thy God is one God," as He Himself said to Israel. This revelation was not indeed common, yet it was made exteriorly, that is to say, through sensible images or spoken words. There is still another mode of contemplating the Divinity, differing from those mentioned, in that it is more interior. In this manifestation, God vouchsafes to visit in person the soul that seeks Him, provided, however, that she devotes herself with all desire and love to this holy quest. And a sign of His coming to us in this manner shall be, as we learn from one who has had the experience, that "A fire shall go before Him and shall burn His enemies round about." For it is necessary that the ardour of holy desire should go before His Face unto every soul which He intends to visit, in order to burn out the rust of vice and sin and prepare a place for the Lord. And then shall the soul know that "the Lord is nigh," when she feels herself inflamed with that fire; and she shall exclaim with the Prophet Jeremias, "From above He hath sent fire into my bones and hath chastened me," or with the Psalmist, "My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out."

When, as sometimes happens, the Object of her desires, so ardently sought after, compassionately reveals Himself to the soul that sighs often, prays unceasingly and afflicts herself in the impatient eagerness of her longing; then, as I think, she will be able, from her own experience, to cry with the Prophet, "Thou art good, O Lord, to them that hope in Thee, to the soul that seeketh Thee." And the angel guardian of that soul, who is one of the friends of the Bridegroom and by Him deputed to be the minister and witness of this secret and mutual intercourse—Oh! how he exults! How he shares in the joy and the bliss of his protégé! Turning to the Bridegroom, he exclaims, "Thanks to Thee, O Lord of Majesty, because 'Thou hast given her her heart's desire, and hast not withholden from her the will of her lips.'" He it is, who, as the solicitous companion of the soul in every place, does not cease to urge her forward and to admonish her with constant suggestions, saying, "Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the petitions of thy heart"; or, "Expect the Lord and keep His way"; or, "If He make any delay, wait for Him, for He shall surely come and He shall not be slack." But to the Lord he says, "'As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so' does this soul 'pant after Thee, O God.' She 'hath desired Thee in the night,' and Thy Spirit within her in the morning early hath watched for Thee." And again, "All the day long has she spread out her hands to Thee. 'Send her away because she crieth after Thee.' 'Return a little' and 'be entreated' in favour of this soul. 'Look down from heaven, and see, and visit, this desolate one.'" So does this faithful paranymph, who is the confidant, without envy, of

the mutual love of the Bridegroom and His Bride, seek not his own but his Master's interests. He acts as an intermediary between the Spouse and her Beloved, presenting to Him her prayers, and bearing back to her His favours. His exhortations reanimate the Bride, and His intercessions appease the Bridegroom. Sometimes also, although rarely, he actually brings them together into each other's presence, either snatching her up to Him, or leading Him down to her dwelling. For he is a domestic, a familiar in the palace, having no fear of meeting with a repulse, and daily seeing the "Face of the Father."

But take care, my brethren, that you do not understand me as conceiving the union between the Word and the faithful soul to be something corporal and perceptible to the sense. I am only speaking the language of St. Paul, who has said that "He who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." The ecstatic elevation of the pure soul to God and God's loving descent to the soul I am trying to describe as well as I can with human words "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." The union whereof I speak, therefore, is a spiritual union, because "God is a Spirit," and He desires the beauty of the soul which He observes to be walking in the Spirit, and not "making provision for the flesh in its concupiscences." More especially if He beholds her inflamed with His love. Such a Spouse, then, so disposed and so beloved, can by no means be content either with that manifestation of her Bridegroom which is given to the many by the things that are made, nor yet with that which is vouchsafed the few in visions and dreams. She will not be satisfied, unless, by a special privilege of grace, He descends into her from the height of heaven

so that she may embrace Him with her tenderest and strongest affections, and in the very centre of her heart, and may have thus intimately united to her the Divine Object of her heart's desire, not in bodily form, but by a spiritual indwelling; not as beheld in vision, but as clasped and clasping in a close embrace of mutual love. Nor does it admit of any doubt that this mode of the divine presence is only all the more delectable for being so interior. For the Word of God is not a sounding but a "piercing" Word, not pronounceable by the tongue, but "efficacious in the mind," not sensible to the ear, but fascinating to the affections. His Face is not an object possessing beauty of form, but rather is the Source of all beauty and all form. It is not visible to the bodily eye, but rejoices the eye of the heart. And It is pleasing, not because of the harmony of Its colour, but by reason of the ardent love It excites.

Yet even here I would not venture to say that He shows Himself as He is, although at the same time He does not appear in this kind of vision altogether different from Himself as He is. For He does not constantly manifest Himself thus, even to the most fervent souls, nor yet in the same way to all. It is necessary that grace and the savour of the divine presence should vary in accordance with the varying desires of the soul, and that the infused relish of heavenly sweetness should please the spiritual palate in different ways and degrees. You must have noticed in this love-song how often He changes His Countenance, and with "how great a multitude of sweetness" He condescends to transform Himself in the presence of His beloved one. Thus, at one time, He appears as a bashful Bridegroom, soliciting the secret embraces of the holy soul, and finding His

pleasure in kisses; at another, He reveals Himself in the rôle of a Physician, with oils and unguents, and that for the sake of such tender and weak souls as still have need of lotions and lenitives, and hence are designated by the name of "young maidens," a name expressive of delicacy. Should anyone murmur at His acting thus, he shall be told that "They that are in health need not a Physician, but they that are ill." Occasionally also, as a Wayfarer, He associates Himself with the wayfaring Spouse and young maidens, who are journeying forward together, and He relieves the labour and weariness of the way with His delightful conversation. Hence they say to each other, after their parting from Him, "Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke to us on the way?" Most pleasant of companions, Who makes all to run after Him, to the sweetness of His voice and the attractions of virtues, as to the delicious odour of spiritual ointments! Hence they, the Spouse and the young maidens, also say, "We will run to the odour of Thy ointments." Sometimes, again, He presents Himself as a wealthy Father of a family, whose house abounds with bread; or rather as a magnificent and powerful Monarch, Who appears in order to support the pusillanimity of His poor Spouse, and to excite her pious cupidity by showing her all the riches of His glory, the treasures of His wine-presses and His storehouses, the abundance of His gardens and His fields, and lastly, leading her even into the privacy of His bedchamber. For "the heart of her Husband trusteth in her"; and amongst all His possessions there is nothing which He thinks ought to be concealed from her whom He redeemed from poverty, whom He has found faithful under trial, and whom He

now embraces as worthy of His love. And so He ceases not to manifest Himself in one or other of these interior ways to the eye of the soul that seeks Him, in order that the word may be fulfilled which He spoke, saying, "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

In all these various kinds of vision, the Beloved appears "sweet and mild and plenteous in mercy." For as the bashful Bridegroom, intent on kisses, He shows Himself pleasant and affectionate; as the Physician with His oils, His medicines, and His unguents, clement and rich in the bowels of piety and compassion; as a Wayfarer, cheerful and affable and full of charm and consolation; as a Monarch, exhibiting His treasures and possessions, munificent and liberal to reward, with a royal liberality. And so, in every verse of this Canticle you will see the Word obscurely represented under such images. Hence, in my opinion, this must have been the Prophet's meaning, where he says, "A Spirit before our face is Christ the Lord; under thy shadow we shall live among the gentiles"; because, as St. Paul tells us, "we see now through a glass, in a dark manner," and not yet "face to face." But this is to be the case only whilst we "live amongst the gentiles." For when we are amongst the angels, it shall be otherwise. Then, enjoying quite the same happiness as these blessed spirits, we also shall see Him as He is, that is to say, in the "Form of God," and no longer under symbol or figure. For just as we say that the Old Dispensation possessed but the shadow and the image, whereas under the Gospel we have the very truth shining upon us, through the grace of Christ present in the flesh; so may we, too, whilst

here below, be said to live in the shadow, in comparison with that light of truth wherewith we shall be illumined in the world to come. No one will deny this, except one who does not agree with the Apostle, when he says, "We know in part and we prophesy in part," and, "I do not count myself to have apprehended." For surely there must be a difference between walking by faith and walking by vision. And therefore, whilst the holy soul lives here in the shadow of Christ, the holy angel rejoices in the splendour of His unclouded glory.

Yet a good thing is this shadow of the faith, which tempers the light to the weak eye, and at the same time strengthens the eye to bear the light. For, as it is written, Christians should be constantly employed in "purifying their hearts by faith." Faith, therefore, instead of extinguishing, guards the light. Whatever that Object is which the angels are already contemplating, the same, no doubt, faith preserves for me, keeping it hidden away in its faithful bosom, to be revealed at the proper time. Is it not well, my brethren, to hold, even thus wrapped up, a treasure which we could not hold uncovered? Even the Lord's Mother herself lived in the shadow of faith, for to her was it said "And blessed art thou that hast believed." She had also a shadow from the Body of Christ, as the Angel implied when he told her "And the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." For that is no slight shadow which is thrown by the power of the Most High. And truly there was power in the Flesh of Christ, which overshadowed the Virgin, so that, by means of the intervening screen of this vivifying Body, she might be enabled to endure the presence of the Divine Majesty and bear the splendours

of the Light inaccessible, a thing otherwise quite impossible to a mortal woman. That is power indeed, by which every opposing power is vanquished. It is at once a power and a shadow, by which the demons are put to flight and men sheltered and defended. Or certainly an invigorating power and a cooling shadow.

We live then, my brethren, in the shadow of Christ, whilst we walk by faith and feed on His Flesh as the source of our life. For Christ's Flesh "is Meat indeed." And consider, whether it may not be for this reason He is even now represented as appearing in pastoral guise, if I may so speak, in this place, where the Spouse seems to address Him as if He were one of the shepherds. "Show me," she says, "where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day." A "Good Shepherd," in truth, "Who giveth His life for His sheep!" He gives His life for them, and His Flesh to them. His life is their ransom, His Flesh their food. Strange thing! He is at once their Pastor, their Pasture, and their Price!

But the conclusion of this discourse is still a long way off. The subject is a large one, and comprehends numerous grandeurs and sublimities, so that it cannot be compressed within narrow limits. Hence it seems best to make here an interruption rather than an end. But memory must watch in the interval, and not let slip what has been said. For in the next sermon, I shall resume this subject, and begin at the point where I now leave off, according as I may be inspired by Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXII

On the different Ways in which the Word presents Himself to different Souls, and on the Sources of Good and Evil Thoughts.

"Show me where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day."

"Show me where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day." Hither, my brethren, have we come, and here we begin. But before proceeding with the explanation of this vision and this loving entreaty, I think it would be well if I briefly recapitulated what has been said of the other visions already dealt with, showing how they may be spiritually accommodated to ourselves, according to the desires and the merits of each. For in this way, the understanding of those, if yet it be granted us, will facilitate the comprehension of this which I purpose to discuss in the present sermon. The undertaking is far from being an easy one. Although the language in which the visions or figures are described seems to refer directly to bodies and things of the body, yet what is meant to be conveyed to us is something spiritual, and hence the causes and significations have to be spiritually investigated. But who is capable of examining and comprehending the so various affections and advances of the soul to which is dispensed the multiform grace of the presence of the Bridegroom? Yet, if we enter into ourselves, and if the Holy Spirit deigns to reveal to us by His light the work which He

condescends to busy Himself constantly about in our interior, I think we shall not remain altogether without understanding of these matters. For I trust that "we have received, not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit That is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God."

Therefore, if to any amongst us, as to the holy Psalmist, it has been given to feel intensely that it is "good to adhere to God," or, to speak more plainly, if there be amongst us such a "man of desires" that he "desires to be dissolved and to be with Christ," and desires this ardently, thirsts for it eagerly, and meditates on it night and day, he certainly shall receive the Word not otherwise than in the character of a Bridegroom, at the time of his visitation. That is to say, at the hour when he feels himself closely embraced in his interior, with the arms, so to speak, of divine wisdom, and experiences in consequence a sweet infusion of holy love. For "his heart's desire" has been given him, whilst still sojourning in the body. Yet only in part, and that but for a time, and a short time. For the Beloved, after having been sought and found with so many watchings, so many supplications, so much labour, such floods of tears, suddenly slips away, when we are supposing that we still hold Him fast. Then, again, He unexpectedly confronts us as, weeping, we pursue Him, and allows Himself to be taken hold of, but not to be detained, for He once more flies suddenly away from our grasp. However, if the favoured soul be instant in prayer with tears, He will come back soon to her, and "will not withhold from her the will of her lips." But very soon He again disappears, and is no longer seen, unless He be followed

with the fulness of the heart's desire. In this way, therefore, even in our exile here below, we may often experience the joy of the Bridegroom's presence, yet not unto satiety. For although the visitation brings us gladness the withdrawal causes pain in proportion. And so long must the beloved Spouse endure this vicissitude of consolation and abandonment until, having once laid aside the burden of corporeal flesh, she, too, learns how to fly, lifted up on the wings of holy desires, and to make her way unimpeded through the far-spreading aerial plains of divine contemplation, with liberty of spirit following her Beloved "whithersoever He goeth." Yet not to every soul does He communicate Himself in this manner, even momentarily, but only to that which, by the fervour of her devotion, and the eagerness of her desires and the surpassing tenderness of her love, proves herself to be a true spouse, and worthy that the Beloved, in coming to pay her a visit, should "put on His beauty," assuming the form of a Bridegroom. For she that is not yet found so disposed, but rather afflicted at the recollection of her sins, ought to say to God, speaking in the bitterness of her soul, "Condemn me not." And she who has still to struggle against violent temptation from her "own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured," it is not a Bridegroom such a one needs, but a Physician. Therefore, she receives, instead of kisses and caresses, only oils and unguents as remedies for her wounds. Have we not often felt this in ourselves? Has not this been our own experience in prayer, still daily afflicted as we are by our present excesses, and tortured by the memory of the past? O good Jesus, from how great a bitterness of soul Thy advent

has frequently delivered me! How often, after anxious tears, after "unspeakable groanings" and sobbings hast Thou not anointed my wounded conscience with the unction of Thy mercy, and soothed it with an infusion of the "oil of gladness"! How often has it not happened that the prayer, which found me almost abandoned by hope, restored to me peace and joy with the assurance of pardon! They who have had the same experience, "behold they know" how truly the Lord Jesus is called a Physician, "Who healeth the broken of heart, and bindeth up their wounds." And such as cannot claim experimental knowledge of this, must believe Him when He says of Himself, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, wherefore He hath anointed Me; He hath sent Me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart." But if they still doubt, let them draw nigh to Him and put the matter to trial. So, from what happens in themselves, they shall come to an understanding of His words, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." But let us now pass on to consider the remaining points of our subject.

There are some, my brethren, who, tired of spiritual things, lapse into tepidity, and in a certain faintness of the spirit, walk sadly on in the ways of the Lord, approaching every duty with a dry and heavy heart, and often giving way to discontent and murmuring. Weary and desolate, they are heard to complain of the length of the days and of the length of the nights. With holy Job they say, "If I lie down to sleep I shall say, when shall I rise? and again I shall look for the evening." Therefore, whenever we happen to suffer anything like this, if only the Lord out of pity should meet us "in the way in which we are walking," and, being

Himself from heaven, should begin to talk to us of the things of heaven, or to sing us a sweet and soothing song of the canticles of Sion, or to entertain us with an account of the city of God, of the peace of that city, the eternity of that peace, and the immutability of that eternity, I assure you, my brethren, such delightful conversation would be as a soft litter to the drowsy and weary wayfarers, relieving at once the languor of the mind and the fatigue of the body. Does it not seem to you that such was the experience of him and such the object of his prayer, who said, "My soul hath slumbered through heaviness; strengthen Thou me in Thy words"? And when his request was granted, did he not exclaim, "Oh, how I have loved Thy law, O Lord!"? Our meditations on our Bridegroom, the Word, on His Glory, His Beauty, His Power, His Majesty, may be considered as His conversations with us. And not only that, but even when with fervent hearts we ponder His testimonies and the "judgments of His Mouth," and "meditate on His law, day and night," let us be firmly convinced that the Beloved is there present and speaking to us, so that, charmed with His words, we may not grow weary of the labour.

Whenever, therefore, my brethren, you are conscious of entertaining such thoughts in your souls, do not mistake them for your own reflections, but acknowledge them to be the interior speech of Him Who declares by the mouth of His Prophet, "I (am He) That speak justice." For there is, in some respects, the closest resemblance * between the thoughts of our mind and the

* Son, observe diligently the motions of nature and grace for they move very opposite ways and very subtlely, and can hardly be distinguished but by a spiritual man, and one that is internally illuminated"—*Imitation*, Bk. III. ch. liv.—(Translator.)

words of Truth speaking within us. Hence, it is no easy matter for a man to distinguish the words which his heart utters from those which it simply hears, unless he prudently attends to the teaching of Christ, where He tells us in the Gospel that "from the heart come forth evil thoughts," and where He says, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" and, "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own." And the Apostle similarly asserts "not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." It is, of course, only the sufficiency to think anything good that he refuses to admit in us. The evil, therefore, that we revolve in our minds is our own thought; the good is the secret word of God. Our hearts speak the former, they only listen to the latter. "I will hear," says the Psalmist, "what the Lord God will speak in me, for He will speak peace unto His people." Consequently, it is God Who speaks peace, piety, and justice in us. Of ourselves we cannot think of such things, we do but hear them. On the other hand, murders, uncleannesses, thefts, blasphemies, and such like come forth from the heart. These are not heard by it, but spoken. For "the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." And therefore "hath the wicked provoked God, for he hath said in his heart, He will not require it." But there is something besides, which is indeed felt by the heart, and yet is not a word uttered by the heart. For it does not come forth from the heart as our own thought. Neither is it the same as that other word, which, as I said, is spoken by Truth to the heart, viz., the word of the Word, since this word is evil. But it is inspired by the opposing powers, as one of the things sent "by evil angels" (*Immissiones per*

angelos malos—Ps. cxxvii. 49). So we read that the demon put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, as an evil word, to betray the Lord.

But who is there that watches so vigilantly and constantly over his interior feelings, whether only in him, or also from him, that in every illicit emotion of the heart he clearly distinguishes between the natural corruption of his own mind and the bite of the serpent? In my opinion, no mortal man is capable of this, unless he who, enlightened by the Paraclete, has received that special grace which the Apostle mentions amongst the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and names the discernment of spirits. One may guard his heart with all possible vigilance, according to Solomon; and with most watchful attention observe all its interior motions; one may be long practised and have frequent experience in these matters, yet never shall he be able to discriminate with certitude between the home-sprung evil and the hell-inspired. For "who can understand sins?" But it concerns us very little to know whence the evil is, as long as we perceive that it is really within us. Rather, whatsoever its source, we should make it our business to watch and pray assiduously, lest we should give it our consent. The Psalmist prays against both evils, viz., that originating from our own hearts, and that inspired by the demon, when he says, "From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others spare Thy servant." I cannot deliver unto you, my brethren, that which I have not myself received. But I have not received, I must candidly confess, any means of distinguishing infallibly between the evil that is begotten of the heart and that which is injected by the enemy Both are truly evils, and proceed from an evil source;

both are in the heart, yet not both of the heart. Of that much I am certain, although I am not able to determine what is to be attributed to the domestic, and what to the foreign enemy. However, as I have already remarked, such ignorance is attended with no great danger.

But there is another matter wherein error would unquestionably be perilous, nay, even pernicious, viz., in assigning to their respective sources the good and the evil which we discover within us. And here we have duly prescribed for us a certain and definite rule lest we should credit ourselves with what belongs to God, mistaking the divine visitation for fruit of our own hearts, or, on the other hand, attribute to grace what is but the product of nature. For between these two there is the same distinction as between good and evil. Our rule, therefore, is this, that nothing of evil must be ascribed to God, nor anything of good to ourselves, except perhaps that which the heart may have previously conceived through the grace of the Word. For "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit." But I think enough has now been said to show how much of the contents of our minds is due to God, and how much to ourselves, or the evil spirit; enough, I say, yet nothing superfluous, since I want the enemies of grace * to understand clearly that, without grace, the human heart is incapable of even a good thought, but its "sufficiency is from God"; and that the good which is conceived is

* The Saint is here alluding to Abelard and his followers who went beyond Pelagius himself in their attempts to depreciate grace, which, according to them, is nothing supernatural at all, but either the very light of our natural reason, or at most, the example of Christ.—(Translator.)

rather the voice of the Lord than the offspring of the mind. If, then, you hear that voice, you will no longer be ignorant "whence it cometh, or whither it goeth," knowing that it "cometh from God and goeth" to the heart. But see to it that the word which comes forth from the Mouth of God does not return to Him empty, "but that it shall do and prosper in all the things for which He sent it." Thus shall you also be able to say, "His grace in me hath not been void."

Happy the soul to which the Bridegroom, as her inseparable Companion, everywhere shows Himself affable, and gives to experience uninterruptedly the sweetness of His divine eloquence! She certainly will have it in her power at all times to deliver herself from the troubles and temptations that have their source in the flesh, whilst she occupies herself in "redeeming the time because the days are evil." Weariness and distress can have no access to such a soul, for, as it is written, "Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad."

Now, it seems to me, my brethren, that the Word also manifests Himself as a great Father of a family, or rather under the form of Royal Majesty, to those who, as the Psalmist says, have "come to a deep heart," viz., have their hearts filled with noble courage, and are rendered more magnanimous by great liberty of spirit and purity of conscience. I mean such as are wont to dare the difficult things, to penetrate the deep things with a kind of restless yet commendable curiosity, to lay hold of the high things and to undertake the perfect things, and that, not so much in the physical, as in the spiritual order. For these are found worthy, by reason of the greatness of their faith, to be

admitted to the fulness of every grace. And amongst all the storerooms of wisdom, I do not think there is a single one from which "the Lord, the God of all knowledge" judges that they should be excluded who show themselves as desirous of truth as they are strangers to vanity. Such a one was Moses, who dared to say to God, "If I have found favour in Thy sight, show me Thy Face." Such was St. Philip, who asked that the Father should be shown to himself and to his fellow-apostles. Such, too, was St. Thomas, who refused to believe unless with his own fingers he touched the Saviour's Wounds, and put his hand into His pierced Side. His faith, indeed, was weak, but was founded, in a sense, in his greatness of soul, as is clear from his boldness in demanding such a proof. Another such was King David, for he also desired to see the Lord, and said to Him, "My heart hath said to Thee: my face hath sought Thee, Thy Face, O Lord, will I still seek." These men, accordingly, had the courage to ask for great things, because they were themselves great men. And they obtained that which they had the daring to solicit, according to the promise made to them, namely, "Every place that your foot shall tread upon shall be yours." For great faith merits a great reward. And as far as you extend the foot of your confidence in the goods of the Lord, so far shall be yours.

Thus we find that Moses spoke to God face to face. The holy Legislator deserved to see the Lord openly and not "in a dark manner" and under symbols and figures, whilst the Lord Himself declared that He revealed Himself to other prophets only in visions and spoke to them only in dreams. St. Philip, likewise, according to the petition of his heart, was shown the

Father in the Son, no doubt, in the words immediately addressed to him, "Philip, he that seeth Me, seeth the Father also," and, "I am in the Father and the Father in Me." To St. Thomas, also, his request was granted, for the Word gave Himself to him to be handled according to his heart's desire, and did not "defraud him of the will of his lips." What shall I say of David? Does not he, too, give us to understand that he was not defrauded of the object of his desire, when he declares that he will not "give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, nor rest to his temples, until he found a place for the Lord"? Thus the Bridegroom will appear in His greatness to such great souls, and will "do great things for them." He will "send forth His light and His truth, and conduct them and bring them unto His holy hill and into His tabernacles," so that each of them shall be able to say with Mary, "He that is mighty hath done great things for me." Their eyes shall behold the "King in his beauty" guiding their steps towards the "beautiful places of the desert," to the home of the roses and the lilies of the valleys, and to the pleasant gardens, and to the refreshing fountains, and to the storehouses replenished with delights, and to the fragrant spices, and lastly, even to the privacy of the royal bedchamber.

Such, my brethren, are the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" concealed in the abode of the Bridegroom. Such are the pastures of life, prepared for the nourishment of holy souls. "Blessed is the man that hath fulfilled his desire with them." Only let me exhort him not to wish to keep to himself alone that which would suffice for many. It is, perhaps, for this reason that after the mention of all these treasures the

Bridegroom is described as appearing in the form of a Shepherd, viz., to remind him who has received so much grace, of his obligation to feed the flock of the simple. By the simple I mean those who have neither the power to attain to such things of themselves, nor yet the courage to go out into the pastures without their shepherd. The prudent Spouse, conscious of this, begs to be shown where He feeds and reposes in the mid-day heat, yearning, as her words indicate, to be fed and to feed with Him, and under His protection. For she does not think it safe to drive her flock far from the Supreme Pastor, on account of the hostile incursions of the wolves, particularly of the wolves that come to us in sheep's clothing. Hence, she is anxious to feed in the same pastures with Him and to repose in the same shade. And she explains the reason of her request when she adds, "Lest I begin to wander after the flocks of Thy companions." These are they who wish to appear the friends of the Bridegroom, but are not. And although they are more concerned to feed their own flocks than His, yet they keep crying out deceitfully from time to time, "Lo, here is Christ, lo, there is Christ," in order to seduce the many, to lead them away from the flock of the Lord, and unite them to their own. Thus far I have been occupied with the obvious sense of my text. The underlying spiritual signification shall engage me in my next discourse, in which I hope to communicate to you whatever lights may, meantime, be vouchsafed me in answer to your prayers, through the gracious mercy of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXIII

On the three Objects of the devout Soul's Quest, on the Mystical Meridian, and the four Kinds of Temptation.

"Show me, O Thou Whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day, lest I begin to wander after the flocks of Thy companions."

"Show me, O Thou Whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day." "Show me why Thou judgest me so," exclaims another voice, that, namely, of holy Job, wherein, however, he does not find fault with the sentence pronounced against him, but merely inquires the cause, desiring instruction in the truth rather than deliverance from his afflictions. The Psalmist likewise makes a similar prayer in these words, "Show, O Lord, Thy ways to me and teach me Thy paths." And what he means by "ways" and "paths" he explains in another place, where he says, "He hath led me on the paths of justice." These three things, therefore, the soul that is devoted to God's service will constantly seek, viz., justice, and judgment, and the place where her Bridegroom's glory dwelleth, as the way in which she should walk, the landmarks wherewith she should guide her progress, and the home whither she should direct her steps. Of this home we read in the Psalms, "One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of

my life." Also, " I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house ; and the place where Thy glory dwelleth." Of the other two, namely, justice and judgment, the same inspired author says, " Justice and judgment are the preparation of Thy throne." Rightly then, does the devout soul seek these three things, since they are nothing else than the throne of God and the " preparation " of His throne. And it is the glorious prerogative of the Spouse that all alike concur to the consummation of her virtue, so that she is rendered beautiful by the form of justice, cautious by the knowledge of judgment, and chaste by the desire of the Bridegroom's presence or glory. Such assuredly the Spouse of the Lord ought to be, beautiful, enlightened, and chaste. Therefore, this petition, which I have put last, has for object a knowledge of the Bridegroom's dwelling. For the Spouse requests of Him Whom her soul loveth, that He would show her where He feedeth, where He lieth in the mid-day.

And notice, in the first place, how beautifully she distinguishes the love of the spirit from the love of the flesh ; for, whilst desirous to designate her Beloved by affection rather than by name, she nevertheless does not simply say, " Thou Whom I love," but, " O Thou Whom my soul loveth " ; and thus she gives us to understand that her love is spiritual. In the next place, consider diligently what is that which pleases her so much is the place of His pasturage. Nor should you pass over without examination what she says of the meridian hour, and the fact that she inquires particularly about the place where He at one and the same time feeds and reposes, which is a sign of great security. For, as I think, the words " where Thou liest " are added in

order to signify that in this place there is no need to stand and to keep watch and ward over the flock, since even whilst the shepherd lies down to repose in the shade, the sheep in safety may wander at will over the pastures. Happy land where the sheep go in and out as they please with nothing to make them afraid! Who will grant me that I may behold you, O most blissful flock, that I may feed on the celestial mountains with the ninety-nine, which, as we read, the Divine Pastor left there whilst He graciously descended to seek the one that had strayed from Him! Securely, no doubt, does He recline close to that flock, since He did not hesitate even to withdraw to a distance from it, knowing that He left it in safety. With good reason, then, does the Spouse sigh after those heavenly hills. With good reason does she yearn for that place of pasture and peace, of tranquillity and security, of exultation, of wonder, and ecstatic bliss. For even I who, miserable man that I am, still sojourn here at so great a distance from that "land of delights," and salute it only from afar—behold, even I am moved to tears at the thought of it, and feel excited to make my own the sentiments and words of those who said, "Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept when we remembered Sion." I, too, feel prompted to cry with the Spouse and with the Psalmist, "Praise thy God, O Sion, because He hath strengthened the bolts of thy gates, He hath blessed thy children within thee; Who hath placed peace in thy borders, and filled thee with the fat of corn." Who would not desire to feed there where he finds peace, fatness, and fulness? That place can surely know neither fear, nor want, nor weariness. For there is a safe abode

in paradise, sweet food in the Word Divine, abounding wealth in eternity.

We also have the Word in this place of our sojourning, but the Word made flesh. And truth is set before us,* but under a sacramental veil. The angels feed on the fatness of the corn and eat their fill of the pure grain. But we, whilst here below, have to be satisfied with the husk of a Sacrament, with the bran of the Flesh, with the chaff of the letter, with the dark shroud of faith. And these are the things whose taste brings death if they be not seasoned in some degree with the first fruits of the Spirit. Assuredly I shall find "death in the pot" unless its contents are sweetened with the meal of the Prophet.† For without the Spirit the Sacrament is received unto judgment, the Flesh profiteth nothing, the letter killeth, and faith is dead. But "it is the Spirit that quickeneth" these elements so that I may live by them. Yet, however abundantly enriched with spiritual grace, the husk of the Sacrament can never surely taste as sweet as the fatness of the pure grain, nor faith as vision, nor the memorial as the unveiled presence, nor time as eternity, nor the reflection as the Face, nor the form of a servant as the Figure of God. For in all matters of this nature, I am rich indeed in faith, but poor in understanding. And unquestionably faith and understanding have not an equally pleasant flavour, since the former stands for merit and the latter for reward. You perceive, therefore, my brethren, that there is as great as difference between the spiritual food of the blessed above and that of sojourners here below, as there is between the places of their habitation; and that, as the heavens are exalted above the earth,

* Cf. *The Imitation*, Bk. IV. ch. xi. † Cf. 4 Kings iv. 39-41.

so are the blessings poured out upon dwellers in paradise superior to those bestowed upon mortal men.

Let us hasten, then, my children, let us hasten to that safer place, to that sweeter pasture, to those richer and more fertile fields. Let us hasten thither where we may dwell without fear, abound beyond the possibility of want, feast without satiety. For Thou, O Lord of Sabbath,* Who judgest all with tranquillity, dost likewise feed all with security in that happy land. Thou art there both Lord of Hosts and Pastor of the sheep. Therefore, Thou reclinest whilst Thou feedest Thy blessed ones. But not so with us. Thou wert standing when, looking down from heaven, Thou didst behold one of Thy little sheep—I speak of the Protomartyr Stephen—surrounded by wolves upon earth. And hence I pray, "Show me where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day," that is, during the whole day; for there the whole day is as the meridian, and knows no decline. Therefore, "Better is one day in Thy courts above thousands," because that one day has never a sunset. But perchance it had a sunrise when the "sanctified day dawned upon us," "through the bowels of the mercy of our God in which the Orient from on high hath visited us." Then, truly "we received Thy mercy, O God, in the midst of Thy temple," when "in the midst of the shadow of death," the light of the dayspring suddenly broke upon us, and "in the morning we beheld the glory of the Lord." How "many kings and prophets have desired to see" this light "and have not seen"? Wherefore? For

* In the Latin, "Domine Sabaoth," Lord of Hosts; but the context seems to require both here and elsewhere, "Domine Sabbati," Lord of Rest (cf. Mark ii. 28), and so I have rendered it.—(Translator.)

no other reason than because it was still night, and that longed-for morning to which mercy was promised had not yet dawned. Hence also King David made this prayer, "Cause me to hear Thy mercy in the morning; for in Thee have I hoped."

The aurora, so to speak, of this spiritual day began with the announcement of the Sun of Justice by the Archangel Gabriel, when by the operation of the Holy Ghost a virgin conceived God in her womb, and, still a virgin, brought Him forth; and it continued as long as He was seen on earth and conversed amongst men. For during all that time the light appeared so weak and as if in truth the light of the aurora, that scarcely anyone realised that the day had dawned upon men. And indeed "if they had known they would never have crucified the Lord of glory." Hence, to the little company of disciples it was said, "So far there is little light in you," * because, namely, it was yet only the aurora or beginning, or rather but the first evidence of dawn, whilst the Sun still hid His beams instead of radiating them around the world. In the same sense St. Paul exclaimed, "the night is passed and the day is at hand," thus indicating that there was as yet so little light that he considered it more correct to say "the day is at hand" than "the day has dawned." Now, my brethren, when did he speak thus? It was certainly after the Divine Sun had returned from beneath the earth and had already mounted to the height of heaven. With how much greater truth might the same words have been spoken whilst the aurora was

* This is St. Bernard's interpretation of the text "adhuc modicum lumen in vobis est" (John xii. 35) which is commonly rendered, "Yet a little while the light is among you."—(Translator.)

overcast, as it were, by the dense cloud, of the "likeness of sinful flesh," that is, by a Body resembling our own in Its liability to all manner of suffering and infirmity, so that neither the bitterness of death nor the shame of the cross was wanting to It? With how much greater truth, I say, could the light have been then described as excessively faint and feeble, and proceeding apparently rather from the aurora than from the actual presence of the Sun?

Therefore, the whole life of Christ upon earth was an aurora of twilight and obscurity, that is, until the brighter effulgence of the Sun's presence in the sky, after His setting and glorious rising, caused the dimness of dawn to disappear before the clearness of morning, and night was "swallowed up in victory." So we read in St. Mark, "And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen." Surely it was morning since the Sun of Justice had risen. But He derived a new loveliness from His Resurrection, and a more placid radiance than He had manifested before, for "if we have known Christ according to the flesh; but now we know Him so no longer." It is written in the psalms, "He is clothed with beauty: the Lord is clothed with strength and hath girded Himself," because He has stripped Himself of the clouds, so to speak, of our mortal infirmities and put on the garments of His glory. Having ascended above the horizon, the Sun began to diffuse His influence gradually over the earth, and little by little to make His light and His heat everywhere more sensibly felt. But however much He increases His warmth and strength, however much He multiplies and scatters

His rays over the whole course of this our mortal existence—for He shall abide with us unto "the consummation of the world"—yet He shall never attain here to His meridian splendour, nor be seen in that fulness and perfection of His glory, in which He is to be contemplated hereafter, by those, that is to say, whom He shall deem worthy of this vision. O true meridian, plenitude of light and heat, when the Sun stands still at His zenith, banishing the shadows, drying up the marshes, extinguishing all noxious odours! O solstice everlasting, when the day no more declines! O light of the noontide! O happy season, representing at once the genial softness of spring, the loveliness of summer, the richness of autumn, and lest I should seem to omit anything, the peace and rest of winter! Or certainly, if you are better pleased with this, winter alone is then "over and gone." "Show me," says the Spouse, "this place of such brightness, peace, and plenitude, in order that, just as Jacob still abiding in the flesh beheld the Lord 'face to face and his soul was saved alive'; or as Moses saw Him, not like the other prophets, in symbols, signs and dreams, but in a far more excellent way, unknown to all save God and himself; or as Isaias, when the eyes of his heart had been opened, contemplated Him on His 'high and elevated throne'; or even as St. Paul gazed with mortal eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ, what time he was rapt up to the third heaven and heard things unutterable—that so I, too, in spiritual rapture may deserve to see Thee in Thy light and in Thy beauty, and contemplate Thee where Thou feedest Thy flock on richer pastures than here on earth, and reposest with greater security.

"Here on earth also Thou dost feed Thy sheep, yet not unto fulness. Neither mayst Thou lie down here, but must rather stand and watch because of the 'terrors of the night.' Alas! we have in our present pasture neither clear light, nor full feeding, nor a safe dwelling. And hence I pray, 'Show me where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day.' Thou sayest I am blessed when I hunger and thirst after justice. But what is such blessedness to the happiness of those who are 'filled with the good things of Thy house,' who 'feast and rejoice before the Lord and are delighted with gladness'? Nevertheless, Thou dost pronounce me blessed if I suffer anything for justice sake. And certainly there is pleasure, though not security, in being fed where one has to fear suffering. But is it not a painful pleasure to be fed and afflicted at one and the same time? Everything here below falls short of perfection; many things are contrary to my will; and nothing is safe. When wilt Thou 'fill me with joy with Thy Countenance'? 'Thy Face, O Lord, will I seek.' For Thy Face is the noontide. O 'Show me where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day'! I know well enough where Thou feedest standing. But show me where Thou feedest and reclinest. Neither am I ignorant where Thou are wont to feed Thy flock at other times. But I desire to know 'where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day.' For during the whole period of my mortal career, I have been accustomed, under Thy care, to feed myself and others upon Thee as Thou art to be found in the law and in the prophets and in the psalms. I have likewise found refreshment in the evangelical pastures and in the writings of the apostles. Often, too, have I, like a beggar, borrowed what

nourishment I could for myself and my children from the examples, the speeches, and the writings of Thy saints. But more frequently—this kind of food being more within reach—I have eaten the bread of affliction and drunk the wine of compunction; and 'my tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: where is thy God?' Yet sometimes from Thy table—for 'Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me'—sometimes, I say, from Thy table, as a gift of Thy compassion, I receive the meat that restores my vigour, when my soul is sad and troubling me. These pastures are known to me, and thither I have often followed Thee as my Shepherd. But show me, I beseech Thee, those I have not yet enjoyed.

"There are indeed other Shepherds besides Thee, who say they are Thy companions, but are not. These have their own flocks and their own pastures, filled with the food of death, wherein they feed their sheep not with Thee nor under Thy direction. But their bounds I have not entered, nor even so much as approached. They are those who say 'Lo, here is Christ; lo, He is there,' promising more abundant fields of wisdom and knowledge. And they impose on the people and draw to them multitudes whom they make 'children of hell twofold more than themselves.' Wherefore this? It is because we have here neither the meridian nor the clear light of day, wherein the truth might be readily recognised, for which now falsity, because of its resemblance to it, is easily mistaken; for it is difficult to distinguish them in the twilight, especially since 'stolen waters are sweeter and hidden bread more pleasant.' And, therefore, I entreat Thee to

'show me where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day,' that is, in the broad daylight, lest I be seduced and 'begin to wander after the flocks of Thy companions,' who are themselves but strays and wanderers, having no certain truth to direct them, 'ever learning and never attaining to a knowledge of the truth.'" So far the Spouse, speaking of the doctrines, as various as vain, of heretics and philosophers.

It seems to me, however, that not alone on account of such human seducers, but also because of the wiles of the invisible powers, the lying spirits who sit in ambush with their "arrows prepared in the quiver, to shoot in the dark the upright of heart"—it seems to me, I say, that because of these especially, we also ought to desire the mid-day, in order to detect by the clear light the cunning snares of the demon, and to distinguish easily from our good angel that angel of Satan who transforms himself into an angel of light. For it is only in the light of noon-day that we can defend ourselves from "the invasion and from the noon-day devil." And the reason why that demon is called the noon-day devil is, I believe, this. There are some amongst the malignant spirits, who although by reason of their darkened and obstinate will, they may justly be named night and night everlasting, yet know how to simulate the day, and even the noon-day, in order to deceive us. So their leader, not content with making himself the equal of God, goes so far as to "oppose and to be lifted up against all that is called God, or that is worshipped." Whenever, therefore, such a noon-day devil takes hold of anyone to tempt him, it is quite impossible that he should be thwarted and fail of his object, but he will most certainly seduce

and supplant his victim by the false appearance of virtue, moving the incautious and unguarded soul to take evil for good, unless the true Noon-day, the Orient from on high, shall enlighten her, and unmask and expose the deceiver. And it is when he comes to us with the suggestion of a greater good, as it were, that the tempter appears as the noon-day, that is, in more than his usual brightness.

How often, for example, has he not urged one or other of you, my brethren, to anticipate the hour of rising, so that afterwards he might have the satisfaction of seeing him nodding whilst all the rest were employed in praising God! How often has he not induced another to prolong his fast until loss of strength rendered him useless for the divine service! How many, through envy of the rapid progress they were making in community life, has he not persuaded, under the pretext of higher perfection, to seek the desert! And at length, when it was all too late, his poor dupes came to realise the truth of the oracle, "Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth he hath none to lift him up!" How many also has he not tempted to apply themselves with excessive zeal to manual labour, with the view that they might injure their health and so require to be dispensed from all the regular exercises! What numbers has he not led to undertake "bodily exercise,' which, according to the Apostle, is "profitable to little," not in a little but in too great a degree, and so defrauded them of the merit of piety! Finally, you yourselves, my brethren, know by experience how some—and I speak it to their shame—who once could not be restrained within the limits of moderation, being carried on in everything by the spirit of

intemperate zeal, have afterwards relapsed into such a depth of sloth that we may apply to them the words of St. Paul: they began in the spirit and are now ending in the flesh. For they seem now to have made a most dishonourable peace with those bodies against which they had previously declared merciless war. You may see such religious—shame on them, I say!—who before used to refuse even necessaries with the utmost obstinacy, now begging importunately for superfluities. And even though there be some who still continue inflexibly stubborn, by their indiscreet abstinence and notable singularity still disturbing the consciences of their brethren with whom they should "dwell together in unity," I know not whether they suppose themselves to have preserved their piety, but to me they seem to have renounced it even more completely than those others above-mentioned. For religious persons who, being wise in their own conceit, have determined with themselves to be guided neither by the commands nor the counsels of their superiors, ought to consider what answer they shall make, not to me, but to Him Who says, "It is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel; and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey." And He declared just before that "Obedience is better than sacrifices, and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams"— where the fat of rams may be taken to signify the abstinence of the obstinate. Hence the Lord asks by the mouth of His Prophet, "Shall I eat the flesh of bullocks? or shall I drink the blood of goats?" By which He means to tell us that He will reject utterly the fastings of the proud and the sensual.

But I now feel apprehensive lest, whilst condemning

the superstitiously austere, I should seem to encourage the lax, and that the latter should hear to their hurt what has been offered as a remedy to the former. Wherefore, let both the one class and the other remember that there are four kinds of temptation. They are thus described for us in the words of the Psalmist, "His truth shall compass thee with a shield; thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night; of the arrow that flieth in the day; of the business that walketh about in the dark; of invasion, or of the noon-day devil." Let all, even you who are neither over-lax nor over-austere, be now attentive to what I think will be profitable to all. Every one of us, my brethren, after his conversion to the Lord, has experienced and does still experience in himself that which Holy Scripture says, "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation." Consequently, according to the rule of ordinary providence, during the first stage of our conversion we were agitated with fear, which is excited in the minds of beginners by the terrifying prospect of a stricter life, and the austerity of regular discipline. Now, this fear is called the "terror of the night," either because the word "night" is used in Holy Scripture to designate adversity; or because we are kept still in the dark about the reward for the sake of which we go forward to suffer what is painful. For if that day had fully brightened, in the light of which we could behold with equal clearness both our labours and the immortal crowns which shall compensate them, no toils, however great, would inspire us with alarm, on account of the eagerness with which we should long for the fruits of them, thus distinctly perceived. This

is clear from the words of the Apostle, "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." But now, because they—the rewards—are hidden from our eyes, there is night meantime and in so far. For we are tempted by the "terror of the night," being afraid to endure our present labours for the crowns which we do not see. Beginners, therefore, have to watch and pray against this first temptation particularly, lest, suddenly overtaken by "pusillanimity of spirit and the storm," they should—which God forbid!—abandon their holy enterprise.

Having overcome this temptation to despair, we have next to arm ourselves against human praise, which is evoked especially by holiness of life. Otherwise we shall run the risk of being wounded by the "arrow that flieth in the day," that is to say, by vainglory. For, in a sense, good fame may truly be said to fly. And it flies in the day, because it springs from the works of light. But if this temptation also is blown aside like an idle vapour, it remains for the seducer to offer us something more substantial, namely, the riches and honours of the world, in the hope that he who refuses praise may still be willing to accept wealth and dignity. Consider here, my brethren, if this be not the order in which the temptations were presented to Our Lord in the desert. After the suggestion to throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, which was intended to excite vainglory, He was shown and offered all the kingdoms of the world. Do you, then, imitate your Master in resisting this third temptation also. If not, you must inevitably be overcome by the "business that walketh about in the dark," which is

hypocrisy. For this vice is born of ambition and makes its abode in obscurity, since it dissembles what it is and simulates what it is not. Busily intriguing at all times, it retains the appearance of piety as a disguise, laying claim to* the merit of virtue and buying the honours thereof.

The last temptation is from the "noon-day devil," who is wont to lie in wait particularly for the perfect. These, as being men of virtue, have escaped all other dangers, viz., from pleasures, applause, and honours. The tempter has now no other weapon wherewith to attack them openly. He comes therefore masked, since he no longer dares to show himself in his real character. And those whom he knows from experience will turn away in horror from manifest evil, he endeavours to seduce by a deceptive appearance of good. Even such as can say with the Apostle, "We are not ignorant of his devices," have to be anxiously on their guard against this snare, and that the more, the further advanced they are in virtue. Hence it is that Mary was troubled at the angelic salutation, suspecting, as I think, some hidden deceit. Josue also refused to receive the friendly angel until he had satisfied himself that he was really a friend. For he inquired whether he was on his own side or was in league with his adversaries, as one who had experience of the cunning tricks of this "noon-day devil." On a certain occasion, again, when the apostles were labouring at the oars, the wind being contrary and blowing the ship about, they saw the Lord walking on the sea ; and supposing

* "Virtutem ejus vindicans." Many editions have "venditans," which seems to make no good sense. The reading adopted here is Mabillon's.—(Translator.)

Him to be a spirit, they cried out for fear. Is it not plain that they then showed their dread and suspicion of the noon-day devil? And you remember the words of Holy Scripture that "in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking upon the sea." It is therefore in the fourth watch, that is to say, in the final stage of our progress towards perfection, that we have to look out for this temptation. And we are given to understand that the higher a soul finds herself to be exalted, the more careful should she be in watching against the "invasion and the noon-day devil." Furthermore, when the true Meridian manifested Himself to the disciples with the words, "It is I, fear not," immediately they were enabled to put aside their suspicion of the counterfeit. Would to God that to us also, whenever specious falsity attempts to impose on us, the true Meridian, "the Orient from on high," would "send forth His light and His truth" to expose the fraud and again, as in the beginning, to divide the light from the darkness, so that we may no longer deserve to be reproached by the Prophet as "putting darkness for light and light for darkness"!

I will next attempt to point out how these four temptations have attacked in their order even the mystical body of Christ, which is the Church, that is, unless so long a sermon would weary you. Well, I will make the exposition as brief as I can. Consider, then, the primitive Church, and see if it was not pervaded and most fiercely assailed by the "terror of the night." For then surely it was night, when everyone who slew the saints thought he was doing a service to God. But when this temptation had been overcome and the tempest had passed over, the Church appeared

in glory, and, according to the promise made to it, soon occupied the place of pre-eminence in the world. Then the enemy, enraged by his previous disappointment, cunningly exchanged the "terror of the night" for the "arrow that flieth in the day," and with it, as St. Paul speaks, wounded "some of the Church." For there arose vain men, who hungered after earthly glory and sought to make a name for themselves. Going forth from the Christian body, they began to afflict their holy mother by teaching diverse and perverse doctrines. But this second plague found a remedy in the wisdom of the doctors, as did the first in the patience of the martyrs.

The present generation, my brethren, is, through the mercy of God, free from both these dangers. But it is manifestly corrupted by the "business that walketh about in the dark." Woe to this generation by reason of the leaven of the Pharisees! I mean, because of its hypocrisy, if indeed that ought to be called hypocrisy which is now too prevalent to lie concealed and too impudent to seek concealment. To-day the foul disease has spread itself throughout the whole body of Christ's mystical Bride, the more incurable in proportion as it is widely extended, and the more deadly the more deeply it penetrates. Were one to rise up against holy mother Church, teaching open heresy, he would be cut off like an infected member, and cast forth to rot. Were a persecuting enemy to appear against her, she might perhaps hide herself from his violence. But now whom shall she cast forth, and from whom shall she hide herself? All are her friends and nevertheless all are her enemies. All are her children and, at the same time, all are her adversaries. All are her domestics, yet none

give her peace. All are her neighbours, whilst all seek the things that are their own. They are Christ's ministers, but they serve Antichrist. Honoured with the goods of the Lord, they refuse to render due honour to the Lord. Hence that worldly ornamentation which daily meets our eyes, that showy style of dress, more befitting a stage-player than a Christian cleric, that splendour of appointment which even kings might envy. Hence the gold mountings on bridles, saddles, and spurs; for such trappings are more carefully embellished than the altars of God. Hence the splendid tables, furnished with costly plate and delicate viands. Hence the "drunkenness and revellings." Hence the music of the harp and the lyre and the flute. Hence the brimming winepresses, and the "storehouses full, flowing out of this into that." Hence the phials of sweet perfumes. Hence the well-filled coffers. It is for the sake of such things that they desire to be, and do actually become provosts of churches, deans, archdeacons, bishops, archbishops. For these dignities are not now bestowed upon merit, but are given to that "business that walketh about in the dark," namely, to ambition.

It was said of old, and now we see the fulfilment of the prediction, "Behold in peace is my bitterness most bitter." Bitter was the bitterness of holy mother Church in the early ages whilst the martyrs were being slaughtered; it was more bitter during her struggle with heresy; but it is now become most bitter owing to the corrupt morals of her own children. These she can neither drive away nor flee from, so powerful have they grown, and "they are multiplied beyond number." She is now attacked by an internal and incurable dis-

temper, and therefore "in peace is her bitterness most bitter." But in what peace? There is peace and there is no peace. There is peace from infidels and peace from heretics, but she has no peace from her children. "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me." Such is her plaintive cry in our day. "They have heaped contempt and dishonour on me by their shameful lives, by their shameful love of lucre, by their shameful traffic, by their devotion to the 'business that walketh about in the dark.'" It only remains now for the "noon-day devil" to make his appearance in order to seduce, if he can, the remnant who still abide in Christ, persevering in their simplicity. For he has already swallowed up the "rivers" of the wise and the "torrents" of the powerful, "and he trusteth that the Jordan—that is to say, the simple and humble children of the Church—may run into his mouth." This is Antichrist * who simulates the day, yea, and the Meridian, "and is lifted up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." Him may the Lord Jesus slay "with the Spirit of His Mouth and with the brightness of His coming," as the true and never-fading Meridian, the Bridegroom and Advocate of the Church, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

* It may be of interest to observe that in St. Bernard's own day the coming of Antichrist was believed to be at hand. St. Norbert, Founder of the Premonstratensians, claimed to have received a revelation to that effect. He was visited by the Abbot of Clairvaux, who has left us an account of the interview in his 56th Epistle: "He declared that he knew for certain that Antichrist was to be revealed in the present generation and that he himself would live to see a general persecution. Still I was not convinced."—(Translator.)

SERMON XXXIV

On Humility and Patience.

'If thou know not thyself, O fairest among women, go forth and follow after the steps of the flocks, and feed thy kids beside the tents of the shepherds."

"If thou know not thyself, O fairest among women, go forth and follow after the steps of the flocks and feed thy kids beside the tents of the shepherds." In times long past, my brethren, holy Moses, who could presume much on the familiarity and the friendship to which the Lord had admitted him, made bold to aspire to a certain extraordinary privilege, so that he said to God, "If I have found favour in Thy sight, show me Thy Face." But instead of the vision for which he prayed, he was given another far inferior, yet one whereby he might sometime attain to that he desired. The sons of Zebedee also, walking in the simplicity of their hearts, ventured to ask a great favour. But they likewise had to be satisfied with a lower grace, from which the ascent to the higher should be made. So here the Spouse, as seeming to make a presumptuous request, is reproved with an answer, sharp indeed, yet helpful and true. For it is necessary that he who aspires to things sublime should entertain lowly sentiments of himself. Otherwise, whilst attempting to rise above himself he would run the risk of falling below himself, unless he is solidly grounded in himself

by means of true humility. And as without humility there is no possibility of obtaining extraordinary favours of God, he who is to be enriched with special graces, has first to be humbled by correction, in order that by humility he may merit his advancement. Therefore, my brethren, whenever you see yourselves humbled, consider this a certain sign of the approach of grace.* For just as "the spirit is lifted up before a fall," so is the soul humbled before being exalted. Both these laws of the spiritual life are found in Holy Scripture, where we read that "God resisteth the proud and giveth His grace to the humble." Finally, we have the case of holy Job. After his magnificent triumph, when his heroic and splendidly proved patience was considered by God to be deserving of a great reward, did He not first cause him to be humbled by many severe trials and so prepared for the coming prosperity?

But it is not enough to receive willingly the humiliations which come to us directly from God, if we do not accept in the same dispositions those which He sends us through the agency of others. Wherefore, listen to a glorious example of such patience from the history of the Prophet David. On one occasion he was reviled with curses, and that by a servant. But the insults heaped upon him awakened in his breast no feelings of resentment, because the influence of grace was there dominant. "What have I," said he, "to do with you, ye sons of Sarvia." O truly "a man according to God's own Heart," who felt called upon to show indignation rather against the avenger than against

* "Temptation going before is usually a sign of ensuing consolation" (*Imitation*, Bk. II. ch. ix.).—(Translator.)

the author of his wrongs! Hence he could say with a safe conscience, "If I have rendered to them that repaid me evils, let me deservedly fall empty before my enemies." He therefore would not allow his followers to prevent the malevolent one from cursing him, esteeming this cursing as so much gain. "The Lord," he added, "hath bid him curse David." Surely he must have been "according to God's own Heart," seeing that he could thus discover the judgments of the Heart of God. Whilst the tongue of the maligner was pouring out its venom upon him, he kept his attention fixed on God's secret designs. And his soul was bending down to receive a divine benediction, at the very time when that Semei's cursing voice was sounding in his ears. Was the Lord, therefore, in the blasphemer's mouth? God forbid! But He made use of the blasphemer to humble David. Nor was this unknown to the Prophet to whom God had manifested "the uncertain and hidden things of His wisdom." Therefore he declared "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy justifications."

Observe, my brethren, how humility justifies us. Humility, I say, not humiliation. How many there are who suffer humiliation without being humble! Some endure humiliation with bitterness, others with patience, others again with gladness. The first class are culpable, the second are innocent, the last are just. Although innocence may be considered a part of justice, still the perfection of justice belongs to humility. Now, he is truly humble who can say from his heart, "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me." But he who submits to humiliation against his will cannot sincerely say this. Much less, he who murmurs against

it. To neither of these do I promise grace simply because he is humbled. Yet there is a vast difference between the two, since the one possesses his soul in patience, whereas the other perishes in his discontent. But, although the latter merits indignation, neither merits grace. For it is not to the *humbled* but to the *humble* that God gives His grace. The humble man is he who converts humiliation into humility, and it is only such can say to God, "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me."

No one, manifestly, esteems that a good to him, but rather an evil, which he endures only with patience. And we know that "God loveth a cheerful giver." Hence, when we fast we are bidden to anoint our heads with oil and to wash our face, in order that our good work may be seasoned, so to speak, with spiritual joy, and that our "holocaust may be made fat." For it is only a joyous and perfect humility that merits the grace of which humiliation is the herald. But the humility which is due to necessity or compulsion, such as that of the man who possesses his soul in patience, such humility, I say, although it obtains life on account of its patience, yet, as accompanied by sadness, gives no title to the grace of the promise. And the reason is, because the words of Scripture, "Let the brother of low condition glory in his exaltation," do not apply to a humility of that description, which is neither spontaneous nor joyful.

Do you wish, my brethren, to behold a man glorying in the right way, and rightly deserving of glory? "Gladly," says the great Apostle, "will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." He does not say he will bear his infirmities

with *patience*, but that he will "*glory*" and "*gladly glory*" in them. Thus he proves that it is good for him that he has been humbled, and indicates that it is by no means sufficient to possess his soul by enduring humiliations patiently, unless he also obtains the grace promised to those who rejoice in their humiliations. Hence we may regard as a general rule these words of Christ, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." From them we learn that not every kind of humility is to be exalted, but that alone which is cheerfully embraced by the will, not with sadness, nor by constraint; just as, on the other hand, not every one that is exalted shall be humbled, but only he who exalts himself, he shall he humbled, in punishment, evidently, of his vain and voluntary ambition. In this way, then, not he who is humbled, but he who humbles himself, has the promise of exaltation, as the reward of his good will. But although the objective element, or the matter of humility, comes from outside, for instance, insults, injuries, or chastisement, not on that account would it be true to say that the man who determines for God's sake to bear these trials is humbled by any other than by himself.

But whither am I drifting? However, I think you will easily excuse this long digression on humility and patience. I shall now return to the subject whence I wandered. My remarks on patience and humility were suggested by the Bridegroom's reply, wherewith He thought proper to rebuke the presumption of His Spouse, in asking things too far above her. This He did, not with the intention of confounding her, but in order to give her an occasion for greater and better tried humility, whereby she would become more deserving

of the higher gifts and more qualified to receive the graces she solicited. But as I am still only at the beginning of this verse, I shall leave the exposition of it, if you allow me, for another sermon, lest the words of the heavenly Bridegroom should be either discussed without interest or heard without relish. From which evil may He protect His servants, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXV

On the two Kinds of Ignorance which we ought to fear and to avoid.

"If thou know not thyself, O fairest of women, go forth and follow after the steps of the flocks, and feed thy kids beside the tents of the shepherds."

"If thou know not thyself, go forth." The Bridegroom, my brethren, is here administering a sharp and severe reprimand, inasmuch as He uses the expression "go forth." Such a command servants are wont to hear from their masters when under the influence of excessive anger and indignation, and handmaidens from their mistresses whose deep displeasure they have incurred. "Get thee hence," cries the wrathful lord or lady, "depart from my presence, get out of my sight, leave my house." This, then, is the language, harsh and bitter enough, and conveying a stern reproof, in which the Bridegroom addresses His beloved. But He speaks conditionally, "if thou know not thyself." And certainly He could not employ a more powerful or more efficacious means for inspiring her with terror than to threaten her thus with being sent forth. You will agree with me in this, my brethren, if you consider well whence she is bidden to go and whither. For what else is that change whereof she is here warned but the decline from the spirit to the flesh, from the goods of the soul to earthly desires, from interior peace and joy of heart to worldly tumult

and the distractions of temporal cares? That is to say, the Spouse is bidden to go forth to things in which she shall find only labour and pain and affliction of spirit. For the soul that has once learned from the Lord and obtained the grace to enter into herself, and in her own interior to yearn for the presence of God and to "seek His Face at all times"—since "God is a Spirit," and they that seek Him ought to "walk in the spirit and not in the flesh, so as to live according to the flesh"—such a soul, I say, would scarcely consider the endurance, for a time, of the pains of hell a more terrible and unbearable chastisement, than, after tasting the sweetness of this interior and spiritual life, to have to return to the pleasures, or rather to the troubles of the flesh, and to become again the slave of the insatiable appetite of the senses, of which Ecclesiastes says, "The eye is not filled with seeing nor the ear with hearing." Attend to one who, learned by experience the truth of what I am saying. "The Lord," exclaimed the Prophet Jeremias, "is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." Should anyone endeavour to deprive the holy soul of this good which she enjoys in union with her God, I believe she would suffer quite as much as if she saw herself expelled from paradise and driven away from the very gates of glory. Listen to another Prophet speaking in the same sense. "My heart," sings the Psalmist, "hath said to Thee: my face hath sought Thee; Thy Face, O Lord, will I still seek." Hence he also says, "It is good for me to adhere to my God." And again, addressing his soul, "Turn, O my soul, unto thy rest, for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee." Hence, I say to you, there is nothing

so dreaded by the soul that has once been raised to union with the heavenly Bridegroom as to be abandoned by grace and thus, in a manner, obliged to go forth again to the consolations, rather the desolations, of the flesh, and again to endure the distraction and turbulence of the bodily senses.

Therefore, my brethren, truly awful and terrifying is the threat conveyed in the words, "Go forth and feed thy kids." As much as to say, "Know thyself to be undeserving of that sweet and familiar contemplation of things celestial, spiritual, and divine, which I have hitherto permitted thee. Wherefore, go forth from My sanctuary, which is thine own heart, where thou hast been accustomed to receive with rapture the hidden and holy impressions of wisdom and truth. And for the future, apply thyself to the task of satisfying and pleasing the senses of the flesh." For by "kids"—which are symbolic of sin and on the Last Day are to stand on the Judge's left—the Bridegroom means the wandering and wayward sensitive faculties, by which, as through windows, sin and death found entrance to the soul. With this interpretation the words which follow in our text—"beside the tents of the shepherds"—can be perfectly harmonised. For kids have their pasture not, like lambs, above, but beside the tents of the shepherds. That is to say, shepherds, who are truly such, although living in tabernacles on the earth and of the earth, viz., their mortal bodies, wherein they carry on their spiritual warfare, are nevertheless wont to feed the flocks of Christ, not on earthly but on heavenly pastures, since they direct them not according to their own, but according to their Master's Will. But the kids, that is, the material senses, do not need such spiritual

nourishment. "Beside the tents of the shepherds," viz., amidst all the sensible goods of this world—in the world of bodies—they find wherewith—I will not say to appease but to provoke their desires.

What an ignominious change of occupation, my brethren! She whose only care heretofore was to nourish her soul, whilst a sojourner and an exile here on earth, with the heavenly food of holy meditations, to study the good pleasure of God and the mysterious dispositions of His sovereign Will, to penetrate the heavens by the fervour of her love, and to visit in fancy the abodes of the blessed, to salute the patriarchs and the prophets and the apostolic company, to admire the bands of triumphant martyrs, and to stand amazed before the magnificent choirs of the angels—she who was accustomed to be thus employed has now to renounce all this happiness and to engage herself to the dishonourable service of the earthly body. Henceforth it shall be her business to obey the flesh, to gratify the stomach and the palate, to beg through the world—through this world, the "fashion" whereof "passeth away"—the means of appeasing to some extent an ever ravenous appetite for pleasure. Send forth, O my eyes, send forth torrents of tears over the fate of such a soul, which, having been brought up in scarlet, now riots in filth! In the words of holy Job, "She hath fed the barren that beareth not, and to the widow she hath done no good." And observe that it is not simply said to her "go forth"; but "go forth and follow after the steps of the flocks, and feed thy kids beside the tents of the shepherds." By these words the Bridegroom, as it seems to me, intends to warn us about a matter of gravest import. Do you

wish to know what it is? Alas! my brethren. It is that a creature * noble by origin, but long since degraded to the level of the brute, and now going miserably from bad to worse, is not allowed even to keep her place amongst the flock, but is bidden to follow after. Now some one may ask, how can that be? It is only what we read in the psalms, "And man when he was in honour did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts and is become like to them." Behold how the noble creature is reduced to the level of the common brutes. And I suppose if these irrational animals were endowed with the faculty of speech, they would say, "Behold Adam is become as one of us." "Man, when he was in honour." Would you like to be told in what honour? He dwelt in paradise. His days were passed in a place of pleasure. Neither suffering nor want had any access to him. Surrounded with odoriferous apple trees, reclining on banks of flowers, crowned with honour and glory, and set over all the works of his Creator, he enjoyed the bliss and the companionship of the holy angels and of all the powers of the host of heaven. Yet his grandest prerogative was the glory of the divine image impressed upon his soul.

But this glory of God he "changed into the likeness of a calf that eateth grass." Therefore it was that the Bread of angels became Grass, and was laid in the manger, and placed before us, who were now nothing better than brute animals. For "the Word was made Flesh," and according to the Prophet, "All flesh is grass." Yet this Grass has by no means become

* "Egregia creatura facta de grege." The holy Preacher is here referring to the etymology of the word "egregia," which is a compound from *e grege*, and means "outside" or "distinguished from the common herd."—(Translator.)

withered, neither has Its flower fallen off, since the Spirit of the Lord rested upon It, as Isaias predicted. And the reason why all flesh was once destroyed was because the Spirit of life had withdrawn from it. For it is written, "My Spirit shall not remain in man for ever, because he is flesh." You must understand that it is the vices of human nature which are here called flesh, not human nature itself; because the Spirit is expelled, not by what is natural in us, but by what is vicious and sinful. It is, therefore, on account of its corruption by sin that the Prophet says, "All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field. The grass is withered and the flower is fallen." But this does not apply to that Flower Which came forth from and rose up out of the root and the rod of Jesse, because on It rested the Spirit of the Lord. Nor does it apply to that Grass or Flesh Which the Word was made, since the Prophet goes on to say, "But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever." For if the Word is Grass, and the Word endureth for ever, the Grass also must endure for ever. How otherwise, unless It endures for ever, can It communicate eternal life? And yet we read of It, "If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever." What Bread is meant we have clearly explained for us in the words that follow, "And the Bread That I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world." How, then, can That which is the Principle of eternal life to others, be Itself otherwise than eternal?

But recall now with me, my brethren, the words addressed to the Father by His Son, where He speaks in the psalm. "Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One," He says, "to see corruption." Doubtless, He is here speaking of His Body, Which lay lifeless in the tomb.

For This was also called holy by the Angel Gabriel, who announced the Incarnation to Mary in the words, "The Holy That shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Surely, then, that holy Grass, Which sprung up in the pastures, verdant with a perennial freshness, of the Virgin's spotless womb, Which the angels contemplate with eager love and ever-new delight—surely, that Divine Grass can never see corruption. If, indeed, Mary, in becoming a mother, had lost her virginal bloom, in that case the Grass also would lose Its greenness. Hence the Food of man converted Itself into the Food of beasts, when man became as a beast. Oh, what a sad and mournful change! That man, the dweller in paradise, the lord of the earth, the citizen of heaven, the domestic of the Lord of Sabaoth, the brother of the blessed spirits, and the co-heir with the celestial powers—that such a one should find himself by a sudden transformation, lying down in a stable from weakness, needing grass, like the beast whose image he had assumed, and because of his ungovernable ferocity bound to the manger, as it is written, "With bit and bridle bind fast their jaws, who come not nigh to Thee!" Yet, even now, O ox, recognise thy Owner, and thou, O ass, thy Master's crib, that the prophets of the Lord may be found faithful, who foretold these wonders of God! Know even in thy present bestial condition Him Whom as a man thou didst not know. Adore in the stable the God Whom in paradise thou didst flee from. Honour the manger of Him Whose divine authority thou hast despised. Eat Him now as Grass, Whom as Bread and the Bread of angels thou didst disdain.

But, you will ask, my brethren, what could be the cause of such degeneration? It is unquestionably the

fact that "man, when he was in honour, did not understand." What is it that he did not understand? The Prophet does not explain; but let me attempt to do so. Being placed in honour, and elated in spirit at the greatness of his glory, he failed to understand that he was but the slime of the earth. And immediately he experienced in himself what, long ages afterwards, one of the heirs of his captivity prudently observed and faithfully proclaimed, when he said, "If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Alas for our miserable first parent, that there was none to say to him, "O earth and ashes, why art thou proud?" Hence it was that the noble rational creature became associated with the dumb beasts; hence the divine image was exchanged for the brutish; hence the society of holy angels gave place to that of irrational animals. Do you perceive now, my brethren, how much to be avoided is this kind of ignorance, which has been the source of such innumerable evils to the whole human race? For the Prophet declares that the reason why man is compared to the mindless brute is that he "did not understand." Consequently, we must guard against this ignorance by every means in our power, lest, haply, if still found without understanding, even after our chastisement, we should have to endure evils much more numerous and terrible than the former; and lest it be said of us, "We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed." And very justly so, since not even correction brought "understanding to our hearing."

And consider, my brethren, if this be not the reason why the Bridegroom, when warning His beloved in so terrifying a manner against ignorance, did not say to her "go forth *with* the flocks," or "go forth *to* the

flocks," but "go forth and *follow after the steps* of the flocks." For why should He speak thus, unless to point out that we ought to be more afraid and ashamed of the second ignorance, i.e., the ignorance after correction, than of the first, since, if the first placed man on a level with the brutes, the second places him after, that is, beneath them. Beneath the brutes I say, because men, ignored and reprobated by God on account of their ignorance of Him, shall stand before His dreadful tribunal and be consigned to everlasting flames, but not so the brutes. No doubt, the condition of those human beings who shall receive such a judgment will be worse than the state of absolute nothingness. "It were better for him," said Christ, speaking of one destined for this doom, "if that man had not been born." He did not mean to say "if he had not been born at all," but "if he had not been born a man," * but a beast, for instance, or some other kind of irrational creature, which, as not possessing the faculty of judgment, would never have been called to judgment, nor, consequently, have been liable to eternal punishment. Therefore, let the reasoning animal, who blushes for his former ignorance, know that although he has the brute beasts as his partners in the enjoyment of the good things of this earth, he shall not likewise have their company in the endurance of the torments of hell—the penalty of the second ignorance; that in the end he shall be expelled with ignominy from the society of the flocks and herds of his fellow-beasts; and that he shall no longer be allowed to go

* "Melius ei fuerat si natus non fuisset homo ille." St. Bernard appears to regard the word "homo" in this text as a predicate, so that the meaning would be, "It were better for him if he had never been born a man."—(Translator.)

forth even *with* them, but only *after* them. For whereas death extinguishes in *them* all capacity for pain, *he* shall find himself a prey to every kind of evil, from which he is never to obtain deliverance. And all this because of his having added the second ignorance to the first. Therefore, man goes forth, and goes forth solitary, to "follow after the steps of the flock," when he is precipitated into the hell of the damned. Does not he, think you, occupy a place lower than the brutes, who, with his hands and feet bound, is "cast into the exterior darkness"? And truly "the last state of that man is made worse than the first," since from an equality with the beasts he is reduced to inferiority.

Even in the present life, if you consider the matter carefully, you will perceive, as I think, that man follows after the brute. For does it not seem to you that one who, whilst gifted with reason, does not live according to reason, is in some sense more beastly than the beasts themselves? The beasts indeed do not govern themselves by reason. But they have an excuse in the poverty of their nature, to which that faculty has been altogether denied. For man there is no such excuse, of whose nature the power of intelligence is a special prerogative. Justly, then, is man considered to go forth and to take rank after the flocks and herds, inasmuch as he is the only animal that by a degenerate life transgresses the laws of his nature, and, though gifted with reason, in his habits and affections imitates the unreasoning brutes. Thus I have shown you that he follows "after the footsteps of the flocks," in this life by the corruption of his nature, and shall do so in the life to come by the extremity of his chastisement.

Behold, my brethren, thus shall the man be cursed who shall be found without knowledge of God. But is

it "without knowledge of God" I should say, or rather "without knowledge of himself"? Undoubtedly, I should say both. Both kinds of ignorance are criminal, and either, by itself, suffices for damnation. Do you wish to be assured of the truth of what I say? Well, in the first place, you certainly cannot doubt that ignorance of God leads to eternal death, since, as you know, eternal life is nothing else than the knowledge of the "Father, the only true God," and of "Jesus Christ Whom He hath sent." Listen, therefore, to the words of the Bridegroom, wherein He clearly and unmistakably condemns the Spouse's ignorance even of herself. For what does He say? Not "if thou know not God," but "if thou know not thyself, go forth and follow after the flocks." Thus it is evident that, as the Apostle declares, "If any man know not, he shall not be known," whether his ignorance be of God or of himself. These two species of ignorance shall furnish us with matter for a very useful discussion, if yet the Lord withholds not His assistance. However, I do not intend to open that subject now, lest through weariness and the omission of the customary prayers for light, either I should treat a most important question with insufficient diligence, or you should listen languidly to what ought to be received with eager appetite. For, as the food of the body, when eaten without relish or hunger, rather injures than benefits, so, and much more so, with the food of the soul. If taken with disrelish or disgust, instead of enlightening the mind, it will torment the conscience. From which may the Divine Spouse of the Church protect us, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXVI

On the Order to be observed in the Acquisition of Knowledge.

"If thou know not thyself, go forth."

I have come to-day, my brethren, with the purpose of fulfilling my promise, of gratifying your desires, and of discharging a duty which I owe to God. Therefore, as you perceive, three motives move me to speak, fidelity to engagement, fraternal charity, and the fear of the Lord. If I am silent, my own mouth shall condemn me. But what if I speak? Of a truth, I fear the same judgment, that, whilst saying and not doing, I shall be again condemned by my own mouth. Do you, then, assist me by your prayers, that I may be able always both to say what is expedient and to practise what I preach. You are aware that the subject I have selected for the present discourse is ignorance, or rather the varieties of ignorance. For, as you remember, I spoke of two kinds, namely, ignorance of ourselves and ignorance of God, both of which I said were criminal and to be avoided. It remains for me now to explain this subject more clearly and to discuss it more exhaustively. But it appears to me that I ought first to inquire whether every kind of ignorance is blameworthy. I am not inclined to think that such is the case, since we shall not be condemned for not knowing everything, and there are many, yea, innumerable things whereof ignorance is no obstacle to salvation.

For instance, in what way would your spiritual interests suffer from lack of acquaintance with the mechanical arts, such as that of the carpenter, or the mason, or any other of those trades which men are wont to ply for temporal uses? Even without any knowledge of those arts which are called liberal, and the study and exercise of which are considered more noble and profitable, countless multitudes of men have saved their souls, pleasing God by their virtues and their works. How many, for example, does the Apostle enumerate in his Epistle to the Hebrews, who became dear to God, less by their knowledge of literature, than by the purity of their conscience and the sincerity of their faith! All pleased the Lord whilst they lived here below, not by the profundity of their learning, but by the merit of their virtues. Neither St. Peter nor St. Andrew, nor the sons of Zebedee, nor any of their fellow-apostles, was chosen from the schools of philosophy or rhetoric. And yet, by means of them, the Saviour "wrought salvation in the midst of the earth." Not that they could say, like the holy man Ecclesiastes, that they surpassed all others in wisdom; but "in their faith and in their meekness" the Lord saved them, and even sanctified them, even appointed them to be the instructors of others. For they made known to the world His "ways of life," and that "not in loftiness of speech," nor "in the learned words of human wisdom," but as "it pleased God by the foolishness of their preaching to save them that believe," since "the world by wisdom knew not God."

Perhaps you consider me unduly severe and narrow in my views on human knowledge, and suppose that I am censuring the learned and condemning the study

of literature. God forbid that I should do so! I am well aware how much her learned members have benefited and do still benefit the Church, whether by refuting her opponents or by instructing the ignorant. And I have read what the Lord says by the mouth of His Prophet Osee, "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee, that thou shalt not do the office of priesthood to Me"; and by His Prophet Daniel, "But they that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity." Nevertheless, I remember also to have read that "knowledge puffeth up," and "He that addeth knowledge, addeth also labour." You perceive, my brethren, that there are distinctions in knowledge, since there is one kind that inflates with vainglory, and another which sobers us. Now, I wish to know which of these two varieties seems to you the more useful or the more necessary for salvation, that which puffs us up with pride, or that which pains and humbles? But I feel sure you prefer the sobering knowledge to the inflating. For whereas our spiritual health is destroyed by the swelling of vanity, the desire of its recovery is excited by the bitterness of humiliation. And he who desires salvation will ask for it and so draw nigh to it, "for every one that asketh receiveth." Finally, He "Who healeth the broken of heart," detests the man that is swollen with pride; since, as we read in Wisdom, "God resisteth the proud and giveth His grace to the humble." And St. Paul thus exhorts the faithful, "I say, by the grace that is given me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety." He does not forbid them to be

wise, but only to be "more wise than it behoveth." But what does he mean by the expression "to be wise unto sobriety"? He means, no doubt, to admonish us that we must examine most carefully what objects of knowledge have the first and strongest claim to our study. For "the time is short." Now, all knowledge is good in itself, provided, however, that it be founded on truth. But we, my brethren, who are in a hurry to work out our salvation "with fear and trembling," in the limited time allowed us, we certainly should devote our first and best attention to the acquisition of that knowledge which appears to be most intimately connected with our spiritual welfare. Do not medical doctors assert that it is a part of their remedies to determine what their patients shall take first at meals, what next, and in what quantity they are to use each kind of meat? For although it is manifest that all species of food are good in themselves, as having been created by God for our use, nevertheless we may easily render them bad for us, by failing to observe the due measure and order. Understand, then, of the varieties of knowledge what I have said of the varieties of food.

But I had better send you to St. Paul himself, whom I acknowledge as my master. For the doctrine which I preach is not mine but his. Yet in another sense it is mine, because it is the doctrine of truth. "If any man," says the Apostle, "think that he knoweth anything, he hath not yet known as he ought to know." You observe, my brethren, that he does not commend the knowing of many things in one who is ignorant of the right manner of knowing. You observe, I say, how he makes the fruit and utility of knowledge to consist mainly in the right manner of knowing. What, therefore, does he mean by the right manner of knowing? Evidently he

wishes to teach us by these words in what order, with what ardour, and with what intention each kind of knowledge should be acquired. In what order, because we ought first to learn those truths which most immediately concern our salvation. With what ardour, because that knowledge should be most eagerly pursued which most powerfully conduces to charity. With what intention, because the motive of our studies must not be vainglory, curiosity, or anything such, but only our own spiritual advancement and the edification of our neighbour. There are some who desire to know simply for the sake of knowing, and this is shameful curiosity. And there are some who desire to know in order that they may become known themselves, and this is shameful vanity. To such persons, certainly, can be applied what the satirist says of the vainglorious man :—

> "You rate the worth of knowledge low
> Unless your neighbours know you know." *

And some there are who desire to know in order to trade with their knowledge, bartering it for gold or for honours, and this is shameful traffic. But there are some also who desire to know in order to edify, and this is charity. And some, finally, who desire to know in order to be edified, and this is prudence.

Of the above-mentioned classes, the last two alone are free from the guilt of abusing knowledge, for only these seek understanding as a means of well-doing. And we read in the psalms, "A good understanding to all that do it," i.e., to all who have the good will to guide themselves by its prescriptions. As for the

* "Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter."—Persius.

others, let them attend to the words of St. James, "To him who knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin." To express the same truth metaphorically, to him who takes food and does not digest it, to him it is harmful. For food which is badly prepared or ill-digested generates noxious humours and thus injures instead of promoting bodily health. In just the same way, extensive knowledge stored up in the memory—which is, as it were, the stomach of the soul—unless it has been cooked over the fire of charity and so distributed and disposed amongst our spiritual members—which are our habits and our acts—so that the soul herself derives a goodness, as our lives and morals testify, from the goodness of the things she knows—unless this be the case, our knowledge shall be imputed to us as sin, and shall be likened to the undigested meat which gives rise to bad and unwholesome humours. Or does it not seem to you that sin is an unwholesome humour? Are not loose morals unwholesome humours? Does not such a one, viz., "he who knoweth to do good and doth it not," suffer in his conscience the torments and inflammations of spiritual indigestion? And does he not hear within himself the doom of death and damnation as often as he calls to mind those words spoken by Christ, "The servant who knew the will of his Lord, and did not according to His will, shall be punished with many stripes." And see if perhaps it be not in the person of such souls that the Prophet Jeremias exclaims, "My bowels, my bowels are in pain." But possibly the repetition is intended to signify a twofold sense, so that besides the meaning just mentioned, there is need to look for another. This is what occurs to me. The Prophet may also have

spoken thus in his own proper person, to indicate that, though full of knowledge and burning with the fire of charity, and longing to communicate these spiritual treasures to others, he yet was unable to find any willing to hear him; and so what he could not distribute became, as it were, a burden to himself. Accordingly, the holy teacher of the Church weeps both for those who proudly refuse to learn how they should regulate their lives, and also for those who, possessing that knowledge, live nevertheless in disregard of the law. Thus much in explanation of the Prophet's repetition.

Do you not perceive now, my brethren, with how much truth the Apostle says that "knowledge puffeth up"? Consequently, I desire that my soul should learn in the first place to know herself, for this is required by reason both of utility and right order. By reason of good order, since the first object and truth for each is that which he is himself. And by reason of utility, because such knowledge does not inflate us with pride, but rather humbles us, and is thus an excellent preparation for the spiritual edifice we intend to raise. For this edifice cannot remain standing unless it be firmly grounded on the foundation of humility. Now, the soul can find nowhere a more fit and efficacious means for humiliating her than in a true knowledge of herself. Only let her not dissimulate; let there be no guile in her spirit; let her place herself as she really is before her own eyes; and let nothing be allowed to distract her attention from herself. Contemplating herself thus in the light of truth, she shall discover how far removed she is from the ideal of perfection. Then, groaning in her wretchedness, for her real wretchedness can no longer remain

concealed from her, will she not cry out to the Lord, with the Prophet, "In Thy truth Thou hast humbled me"? For how can she help being truly humbled in this true knowledge of herself, when she beholds herself laden with sins, oppressed with the weight of this corruptible body, entangled in worldly cares, polluted with the filth of carnal desires, blind, earthward stooping, feeble, involved in many errors, exposed to a thousand dangers, agitated by a thousand fears, disquieted by a thousand suspicions, discouraged by a thousand difficulties, burdened with a thousand necessities, prone to vice, indisposed for virtue? What motive for pride can such a one have? How can such a one haughtily lift up her eyes or boldly hold her head erect? Will she not rather, according to the words of the Psalmist, be "converted in her anguish, whilst the thorn is fastened?" Yes, she will be converted to tears; she will be converted to lamentations and groans; she will be converted to the Lord. Then will she cry out in her humility, with the Prophet, "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee." And being now converted, she will receive consolation from the Lord, because He is "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation."

As for me, my brethren, so long as I look upon myself, "my eye abideth in bitterness." But if I lift up my face and turn my gaze to the help of the divine compassion, the depressing vision of my own unworthiness is relieved by the joyous vision of God, and I say to Him, "My soul is troubled within myself, therefore, will I remember Thee." Nor is that an unimportant vision of the Deity, which gives us the experience of Him as loving and gracious; because in

truth, "He is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy, and ready to repent of the evil," since goodness is His very nature and it is peculiar to Him "to show mercy always and to spare." By this experience, therefore, and in this order, God gives us a saving knowledge of Himself. Man first recognises the helplessness of his condition. He then cries to the Lord. The Lord hears and makes answer to him, "I will deliver thee and thou shalt honour Me." And thus the knowledge of oneself leads on to the knowledge of God. He is perceived by means of His own image, which is renewed in us, whilst we, confidently "beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

But now, lastly, observe that both self-knowledge and the knowledge of God are alike essential for salvation, so that it is impossible to save one's soul in the absence of one or other. For if you do not know yourselves, you cannot have in you either the fear of God or true humility. Now, I leave it to yourselves, my brethren, to decide whether or not you can count upon your salvation without the fear of God and without humility. I am glad to learn from that murmur you have made that you have not the mind, or rather the madness, to take the affirmative view. Consequently, there is no need for me to labour a point already sufficiently clear. But let me call your attention to the other questions. Or, perhaps, I had better break off here for the sake of the drowsy. I expected to complete in one discourse my promised instructions concerning the two kinds of ignorance. And I should do so in fact, only that this sermon has already wearied

many of you and is judged to be tedious. For I can see some yawning, and some even fast asleep. However, I am not surprised. The unusual length of last night's vigils accounts for their heaviness and excuses it. But this defence is not possible in the case of all. For what shall I say of those who have succumbed to sleep, both here and during the divine office? But I will not shame them further. It is enough to have made them sensible of their fault. And I am sure they will be more vigilant in future, fearing the penalty of my animadversion. In that expectation I will spare them for this time. And although reason demands that this discourse should be completed without a break, out of charity for them I will now interrupt it, making an end where the end is not, and will resume the discussion on another occasion. But let the offenders, in gratitude for the mercy they have obtained, glorify with us all the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXVII

On the Knowledge and the Ignorance of God and of Self.

"If thou know not thyself, go forth."

I do not think, my brethren, that there is any necessity to warn you to-day against yielding to sleep, since, doubtless, the words of charitable reproof which I addressed to you so late as yesterday are still fresh in your memory, and have made you determined to keep wide awake. You recollect, then, that I obtained your assent to the proposition that no one is saved without self-knowledge. For it is, in fact, to this knowledge that we owe the virtue of humility—the mother of salvation—and also the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of salvation quite as much as it is the beginning of wisdom. But when I say that there can be no salvation without self-knowledge, I mean, of course, for those who are of the age and have the capacity for acquiring it. This limitation is necessary on account of infants and idiots whose case is completely different. But what if one has no knowledge of God? Can such ignorance consist with the hope of salvation? Surely not. For we can neither love God without the knowledge of Him, nor possess Him without the love of Him. Therefore, let us know ourselves that we may fear God, and let us know God that we may also love Him. The first of these virtues introduces us to wisdom, the second brings us to its

perfection, because "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and "love is the fulfilling of the law." Consequently, it is as necessary to avoid ignorance of God and ignorance of self as it is certain that without the fear and the love of God we cannot save our souls. As regards the knowledge of other objects, that is a matter of indifference; we shall not be condemned for the want of it any more than its possession will save us.*

I am far from saying, however, that the knowledge of letters is to be despised or neglected. Such learning furnishes and adorns the mind, and enables us to instruct others. But it is expedient and necessary to acquire, first of all, that twofold knowledge of God and self, in which, as I have already shown, our salvation essentially consists. And see if the Prophet had not this order of knowing in mind, and did not recommend it to us when he said, "Sow for yourselves unto justice, and reap the hope of life," after which he added, "and light for yourselves the lamp of knowledge."† He put the knowledge of letters in the last place, because, like a picture, it must rest upon something solid; and for this reason he would have

* The Saint, of course, is here speaking of learning absolutely and in itself. But what is indifferent, when so considered, may, and often does, become matter of obligation in the concrete, by reason of particular circumstances. Thus priests, lawyers, medical doctors, etc., are strictly bound to possess the learning necessary for the proper discharge of their respective duties.—(Translator.)

† St. Bernard is here quoting not from the Vulgate but from the Septuagint, ΩΣΗΕ I. 12. "Σπείρατε ἑαυτοῖς εἰς δικαιοσύνην, τρυγήσατε εἰς καρπὸν ζωῆς, φωτίσατε ἑαυτοῖς φῶς γνωσέως." The Vulgate reading is altogether different, "Seminate vobis in justitia et metite in ore misericordiae, innovate vobis novale."—(Translator.)

it superimposed upon the knowledge of God and self as upon its proper basis and support. Securely may I apply myself to the acquisition of learning, if, through the grace of hope, I have first been rendered secure of the possession of life. Therefore, my brethren, you have sown "for yourselves unto justice," if by a true knowledge of yourselves you have been awakened to the fear of God, if you have humbled yourselves, poured out tears of contrition, given abundant alms, and devoted yourselves to all the other exercises of piety; if you have afflicted your bodies with fastings and watchings; if you have beaten your breasts with penitential blows and wearied heaven with your cries for mercy. This is what is meant by sowing "for yourselves unto justice." The seeds to be sown are good works, virtuous pursuits, holy tears. "Going they went and wept," says the Psalmist, "casting their seeds." But then shall they always weep? Certainly not. For, as the Prophet goes on to say, "coming they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves." Rightly does he represent them as coming "with joyfulness," since they carry the "sheaves" of immortal glory. But it may be objected that this joy is reserved for the Last Day, and that the wait is too long. Do not let such a thought discourage you; do not lose heart through "pusillanimity of spirit." You have meantime of the first-fruits of the Holy Ghost that which you may now reap "with joyfulness." "Sow for yourselves unto justice," urges the Prophet, "reap the hope of life." Mind, he does not tell us to wait until the Last Day, when we shall come into actual possession of what we now possess in hope. But he speaks of the present. The entrance into eternal life will assuredly fill us with immense

happiness and a joy exceeding great. But is not the very hope of such a joy a joy in itself? "Rejoicing in hope," says the Apostle. And notice how David does not tell us that he *will rejoice*, but that he *has rejoiced* in the hope of entering into the house of the Lord. He was not yet in actual enjoyment of life everlasting, but the hope of it he had already reaped. And he experienced in himself the truth of the words of Holy Scripture, where it is written that not alone the reward itself, but the mere "expectation of the just is joy." This joy is engendered in the heart of him who sows for himself unto justice, by the assurance of his pardon; provided, however, that such assurance is confirmed by the efficacy of the grace received in enabling him to live thereafter more holily. Everyone of you, my brethren, who is conscious of these operations in his interior, knows what the Spirit speaks, for His words and His works are ever in harmony. We therefore understand what is said, because what the ear hears exteriorly the heart feels within. For He Who speaks in us also works within us, "the same Spirit dividing to everyone according as He will," communicating to some the gift of speech, to others the grace of well-doing.

Every one of you, therefore, who, after passing beyond the first stage of his conversion, usually so painful and sorrowful, rejoices in the renewal of hope and in his elevation on the wings of grace to the more tranquil state of heavenly consolation—every such soul, I say, is in truth already reaping, enjoying the temporal fruit of her tears, She has both seen God and heard His voice saying to her, "Give her of the fruit of her hands." For how can it be doubted that she has seen God, since

she has even tasted and seen "that the Lord is sweet"? Oh, how sweet and savoury dost thou taste to him, Lord Jesus, who has obtained from Thee not only the pardon of his sins, but even the grace of sanctity, and not that alone, but, to crown Thy favours, the promise of eternal life as well! Happy he who has reaped so rich a harvest, having here his "fruit unto sanctification, and the end life everlasting"! Justly has he, who wept on discovering himself, rejoiced, like the apostles, on beholding the Lord, at the sight of Whose tender compassion he has already gathered such abundant sheaves, pardon, sanctification, and the hope of heaven. Oh, how true are those words which we read in the Psalmist. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy"! Herein we find included both the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God, the former sowing in tears, and the latter reaping in joy.

Having first acquired this twofold knowledge of God and self, we are now in no danger of being "puffed up" by whatever learning we may add to it. For such learning can offer us nothing in the way of earthly honour or emolument, which is not so worthless in comparison with the hope we have conceived and the gladness of that hope, now deeply rooted in our soul, that it can no longer be a temptation to us. "And hope confoundeth not; because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Who is given to us." Thus, the reason why hope "confoundeth not" is because charity infuses certitude. For it is by charity that "the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God." What advantage, therefore, can any learning of our own, however great, bring within our reach, which is not less than

this glory whereby we are numbered amongst the children of God? But this is saying too little, since, in comparison with such and so great a dignity, the whole earth and the fulness thereof, although all that were offered to each one of us, would not be worthy of even a single thought. But if we are ignorant of God, how can we hope in One Whom we do not know? If we are ignorant of ourselves, how can we have humility, since we shall think ourselves to be something, whereas we are nothing, as the Apostle speaks? And we know that without humility and hope we can have neither lot nor fellowship in the inheritance of the saints.

Let us consider now, my brethren, with what care and solicitude we ought to guard against both these kinds of ignorance, one of which is the source of all sin and the other the consummation thereof; just as, on the other hand, the first of the two kinds of knowledge is the beginning, and the second the perfection, of wisdom. For self-knowledge begets the fear of the Lord, whilst from the knowledge of God we are led to the love of Him, as I have already sufficiently explained. It remains now to show how the twofold ignorance stands in the same relation to sin. As "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," so "pride is the beginning of all sin"; and just as the love of God is the consummation of wisdom, in the same way is despair the consummation of sin. Again, just as the knowledge of self leads to the fear of the Lord, and the knowledge of God to the love of Him; so, on the contrary, ignorance of self is the mother of pride, and ignorance of God gives birth to despair. Pride is the daughter of ignorance of self, inasmuch as our thought deceived itself and deceiving us, makes us believe ourselves to be

better than we really are. Now this is pride, this "the beginning of all sin," to appear greater in one's own eyes than one is in truth, or in the eyes of God. And therefore it is said of him who first committed this most dreadful sin, the devil, namely, that "he stood not in the truth, but is a liar from the beginning."* And the reason is because he was greater in his own thought than he was in truth. What then would be the consequence if one departed from truth, not by exaggerating his merit, but by esteeming himself less than he really is? Undoubtedly his ignorance would excuse him, and he would not, at any rate, be reputed proud; and instead of his "iniquity being found unto hatred," his humility would rather be found unto grace and pardon. Had we a clear knowledge of how we stood, each of us, in the judgment of God, it would be our duty to place ourselves neither above nor below that level, but in all things to be conformed to truth. But now, since this judgment "hath made darkness its hiding-place," and the divine appraisement is concealed from our view, so that "no man knoweth whether he be worthy of love or hatred," in this uncertainty it is manifestly better and safer to act according to the counsel of Divine Truth, and to choose for ourselves the last place, whence we may afterwards be promoted with honour, than to usurp too high a position which we shall soon be compelled to resign in confusion.

We run no risk, consequently, however much we humble ourselves, no matter how much meaner we make

* Quoted compendiously. St. John's words are, "He was a murderer from the beginning and he stood not in the truth; because truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father thereof."—(Translator.)

ourselves than we really are, that is to say, than we are in the estimation of Infinite Wisdom. But it would be an immense evil and a fearful danger to exalt oneself, be it ever so little, above one's proper place, for instance, to prefer myself in thought even to one, since, perchance, in the eyes of God, he may be my equal or superior Let me give you an example to illustrate my meaning. When I am passing through a very low doorway, it will do me no harm to stoop as much as I please. But if I raise myself too high, even by so much as a finger's breadth, I at once meet with obstruction, and experience the painful sensation of knocking my head against the lintel. It is the same in spiritual things. The soul has nothing to fear from humility, no matter how low she bends. But should she rashly presume to lift herself above her merit, even in the slightest degree, dreadful and exceedingly awful are the evils that threaten her. Wherefore, O man, beware of comparing thyself either with those who are greater than thee or with those who are less than thee, with many, or even with one. For how dost thou know whether he, who appears to thee the vilest and most miserable of all men, whose infamous and utterly abandoned life makes thee shudder with horror, whom thou regardest consequently as deserving of contempt, not only in comparison with thyself—who, in thine own judgment, art living soberly, justly, and piously—but even in comparison with all other criminals, as being the most criminal of all—how, I ask, dost thou know whether such a one may not become hereafter better than both they and thou by the "change of the right hand of the Most High," or whether he is not so even now in the sight of God? Therefore, the Master recommends us to sit down, not in

an intermediate place, nor in the place next the last, nor in one of the last, but in the very last of all. "Go," says He, "sit down in the lowest place," so that, placed last and alone, thou mayest not presume, I do not say to prefer, but even to compare thyself to anyone. Behold, my brethren, how great an evil results from lack of self-knowledge, pride, namely, which is the sin of the devil, and the beginning of all sin. As regards the ill-consequences to which the ignorance of God gives rise, I reserve that subject for another occasion. This adjournment is necessitated by the lateness of the hour, for we were not assembled to-day as early as usual. And so let it suffice, meantime, that each of you has been admonished not to remain in ignorance of himself, not only by me, but also by the grace and inspiration of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXVIII

On the Manner in which Ignorance of God leads to Despair, and on the Beauty of the Spouse.

"If thou know not thyself, go forth."

What is the evil that results from ignorance of God? Here, my brethren, I have to resume the discussion which I interrupted yesterday, and which, if you remember, I had conducted to this point. What, then, is this evil? I have already told you. It is despair. But how does the lack of a knowledge of God lead to despair? This I shall now endeavour to make clear. Imagine, then, a person entering into himself, recalling in the bitterness of his soul all the evils he has done, and purposing to amend, and to abandon all his wicked ways and his carnal conversation. Now, if such a one knows not how good the Lord is, that "He is sweet and mild and bounteous to forgive," will not his own natural reason become his accuser and say, "What art thou about? Wouldst thou lose both this life and the life to come? Thy sins are heinous in malice and countless in multitude. Thou shalt never be able to atone for crimes so great and so many, no, not even shouldst thou strip the very skin from thy body. Besides, thou art of a weak constitution, thou hast lived delicately, and it will be impossible for thee to conquer the force of habit." As he does not know how easily all these difficulties would dissolve and vanish before the power of that Omnipotent Goodness, Who desires

that none should perish, the poor sinner is driven to despair by such-like arguments, and miserably returns to his former evil courses. The result is final impenitence, which is the greatest of sins, as being, in truth, that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost which shall be forgiven neither here nor hereafter. For either he is overwhelmed and swallowed up by an excess of sadness, which hurries him onward into the abyss, whence he shall never emerge to seek for consolation, as it is written: "The wicked man, when he is come into the depth, contemneth," that is to say, he makes no effort to deliver himself; or else he deliberately blinds himself to the danger of his state, calms his conscience by some kind of specious reasoning, and plunges again and irrevocably into the pleasures and satisfactions of a worldly life, determined to enjoy to the utmost, and as long as he can, all the good things of this earth. But "when he shall say peace and security, then shall sudden destruction come upon him, as the pains upon her that is with child, and he shall not escape." In this way, then, from ignorance of God comes the consummation of all malice, which is nothing else but despair.

The Apostle tells us, my brethren, that "some have not the knowledge of God." But I will venture to say that none of those who refuse to be converted have the knowledge of God. For, unquestionably, the only reason of their unwillingness is that they imagine Him to be cold and austere Who is really kind and loving; Him Who is full of mercy and sweetness they represent to themselves as hard and implacable, cruel and terrible. Thus "iniquity lieth to itself," and fashions for itself an idol of its own, since the god of its fancy is not the

Lord. "Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?" Are you afraid He will refuse to pardon your sins? But, as St. Paul declares, together with His own Hands they were fastened to the cross. Or is it the thought of penance that terrifies you, who are so tender and delicate? But "He remembereth that we are dust." Or is it the vices you have contracted and the binding habits of sin? But "the Lord looseth them that are fettered." Perhaps you are apprehensive lest, provoked by the magnitude and the multitude of your crimes, He should hesitate to extend to you a helping hand? But, according to St. Paul, where sin has abounded grace is wont to superabound. Or finally, is it that you are solicitous about your clothes and your food and the other necessaries of the body, and are therefore reluctant to renounce what you possess? But "your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." What more can you desire? What obstacle remains still in the way of your salvation? But the case is as I have said. You have not the knowledge of God, and you refuse to believe what I tell you of Him. If I could only induce you to credit those at least who speak from experience! For "unless you believe you will not understand." "But not all have the gift of faith."

God forbid, my brethren, that we should suppose the Spouse to be warned against this danger, that is to say, against ignorance of God. For she is favoured, I shall not say with so much knowledge of Him Who is at once her Bridegroom and her God, but with so much friendship and familiarity, that she deserves to enjoy frequently His conversation and even His kisses; and now she says to Him with the boldness of an intimate, "Show me where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in

the mid-day." Here evidently she begs to be shown, not Himself, but the "place where His glory dwelleth"; although He is not really distinct either from His place or from His glory. But she is considered deserving of a reproof on account of her presumption, and of a warning about self-knowledge, in which she shows herself to be in some degree wanting by esteeming herself capable of a vision so great. This presumptuous request is due, either to the fact that in an ecstasy of love she forgot that she is still in the flesh, or else to the vain hope that, whilst abiding still in the body, she may be able to attain to the inaccessible brightness of the Divinity. Therefore, she is recalled to herself; she is convicted of ignorance and rebuked for her boldness. "If thou know not thyself," the Bridegroom answers, "go forth." Thus dreadfully does the Bridegroom thunder against His Spouse, exhibiting Himself here not as a Bridegroom but as a Master. Nor is it out of anger that He so threatens her, but to the end that, being frightened, she may take pains to purge herself of every stain, and thus purified, may be made worthy of the vision for which she longs. For it is only the clean of heart that shall see God.

Rightly, too, she is called "beautiful," not absolutely and in every sense, but "beautiful amongst women," that is to say, beautiful with qualifications; and this with the intention of repressing her presumption still more, and that she may learn what is yet wanting to her. For it seems to me that by the name of women are here designated those carnal and worldly souls, which have nothing virile in them, which manifest no strength or constancy in their activities, but in their lives and conduct show themselves entirely lax, soft.

and effeminate. The spiritual soul, on the contrary, walks not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit, and so far is already beautiful. Yet, inasmuch as she still lives in the body, she falls short of the perfection of beauty. Hence, she is described, not as absolutely beautiful, but as beautiful amongst women. That is to say, she is beautiful, in comparison with souls which are earthly, and not, like her, spiritual. But she is not beautiful, as compared with the blessed angels, with the Virtues, Powers, or Dominations. Thus, of old, one of the patriarchs was found and called "just in his generation," that is, just beyond all the other men of his time and generation. Thamar, also, is proclaimed justified as compared with Juda, that is, more just than Juda. Likewise, in the Gospel, the Publican is said to have gone down to his house justified, but justified in comparison with the Pharisee. And finally, in that magnificent eulogium pronounced upon the great Baptist, it is said of him that he is without a superior, but only amongst the children of women, not amongst the choirs of blessed heavenly spirits. In the same way the Spouse is now called beautiful, not in relation to the holy angels, but, at least whilst she sojourns here below, only amongst women.

Let the Spouse, therefore, cease, so long as she lives on earth, to inquire curiously into the things of heaven, lest haply the "searcher of majesty be overwhelmed by glory." Let her cease, I repeat, as long as she dwells amongst women, to strain after those objects which are found in the abode of the high celestial princes, which to them alone are visible, to them alone lawful; for, heavenly themselves, they are only suitable for the contemplation of heavenly intelligences. "The vision.

O my Spouse," so the Bridegroom seems to speak, " which thou desirest to be shown to thee is entirely above thy capacity. Thou hast not yet the strength to gaze upon that marvellous and meridian brightness wherein I dwell. Thou sayst, 'show me where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day.' But to be drawn up into the clouds, to penetrate into the plenitude of glory, to plunge into abysses of splendour, and to dwell in light inaccessible—this neither suits an earthly life nor the condition of a mortal body. It is reserved for thee until the last day, when I shall present thee glorious to Myself, 'not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.' Or knowest thou not that as long as thou livest upon earth in this body thou art an exile from the light? Whilst thou art not as yet wholly beautiful, how canst thou consider thyself capable of contemplating the Sum and Perfection of all beauty? Or how canst thou ask to see Me in My glory before thou hast learned to know thyself? For hadst thou a thorough knowledge of thyself, thou wouldst surely understand that, being weighed down by a body subject to corruption, thou canst not possibly lift up thine eyes to fix them on that Brightness on which the angels desire to look. But the time will come when I shall appear in My glory, and on that day thou shalt be wholly beautiful, just as I am wholly beautiful; and being thus made like to Me, thou shalt see Me as I am. Then shalt thou hear it said to thee, 'Thou art all fair, O my beloved, and there is not a spot in thee.' Meantime, although thou art like to Me in part, yet, because thou art also in part dissimilar, thou must be content to know in part. Attend to thyself, and 'seek not the things that are too high

for thee, and search not into things above thy ability.' For, if thou know not thyself, O beautiful amongst women—I call thee beautiful, but only amongst women, that is, in part, ' but when that which is perfect shall come, that which is in part shall be done away.' If, then, thou know not thyself "——But the words which follow have been sufficiently expounded and there is no need to repeat. I had promised to put some useful considerations before you concerning the two kinds of ignorance. If you think I have failed to keep that engagement, I beg you to pardon me, as I certainly had the good will. " For to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good I find not." That is to say, unless in so far as it shall be given to me unto your edification through the gracious mercy of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXIX

On the Chariots of Pharao and the Captains of his Host.

"To My company of horsemen, in Pharao's chariots, have I likened thee, O My love."

"To My company of horsemen, in Pharao's chariots, have I likened thee, O My love." From these words, my brethren, I gladly infer, in the first place, that the patriarchs of old were a type of the Church, and had foreshadowed to them the sacraments of our redemption. Thus, in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, that astounding miracle, whereby the sea rendered the people of the Lord the double service of affording them a passage and wreaking vengeance on their enemies, evidently prefigured the grace of baptism, by which our souls are saved and our sins submerged. "All," says the Apostle, "were under the cloud, and all were baptised in the cloud and in the sea." But in the first place it is necessary, according to my custom, to show the sequence of the words, and the connection between the foregoing and the following. Then I shall proceed, if I can, to draw from them some consoling truths which may be useful for our moral instruction. The Bridegroom, therefore, after checking the presumption of His Spouse with a harsh and cutting reproof, lest she should abandon herself to excessive sadness, now recalls to her mind some of the favours she has already received, and

promises others not yet enjoyed. He even calls her "beautiful" and His "love." As if He should say, "Do not think, O My love, that it is from any feeling of dislike or ill-will I have spoken to thee with such severity. For in the gifts with which I have honoured and adorned thee, thou hast received evident proofs of My regard. Nor have I now any intention to take them back, but rather to add other and more precious favours." Or we may fancy Him speaking thus, "Do not take it ill, My cherished Spouse, that thou hast not obtained thy present request, because thou hast already received many favours of Me and shalt receive still greater, provided thou continuest faithful in My love." So much for the verbal sequence.

Now, let us see, my brethren, what are those gifts referred to by the Bridegroom, as having been bestowed by Him upon His Spouse. The first is that He has likened her to His company of horsemen in the chariots of Pharao. This He did by delivering her from the yoke of sin, and destroying in her all "the works of the flesh," just as the chosen people were set free from the servitude of Egypt, all Pharao's chariots being overthrown and submerged. That in truth was the greatest of mercies. And if, like the Apostle, "I should have a mind to glory" in it, "I shall not be foolish; for I will say the truth"—that "unless the Lord had been my Helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell." I am not ungrateful; I am not unmindful. "The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever." So much have I in common with the Spouse. As for the rest, she, by an incommunicable privilege, has been raised, after her deliverance, to the rank and dignity of His only beloved, and, as the Spouse of the Lord, has been

adorned with beauty, but for the present only in her cheeks and neck. Moreover, she has been promised necklaces for ornaments, and they are to be of gold to make the gift more precious, and inlaid with silver to enhance their beauty. Who can help admiring the wonderful order in which these favours are bestowed? First, she is mercifully liberated; secondly, she is condescendingly loved; thirdly, she is kindly cleansed and purified; lastly she receives a promise of the most magnificent ornaments.

I have no doubt, my brethren, that some amongst you can already recognise in their own spiritual histories the realities which I am endeavouring to express in words, and, instructed by their own inner experience, anticipate in their thoughts the slowness of my remarks. Nevertheless, remembering what the Psalmist says, "The declaration of Thy words giveth light, and giveth understanding to little ones," I think it worth while, for the sake of these "little ones," to explain what I have been saying somewhat more fully. "For the Spirit of wisdom is benevolent," and is pleased with the benevolent and diligent instructor, who strives his best to satisfy the educated and intelligent, without neglecting to bend to the capacity of others less gifted. Again, as you know, Wisdom Itself, says "They that explain Me shall have life everlasting," and I am unwilling to lose that reward. And besides, even in matters that seem to be plain enough, mysteries may sometimes lie concealed, a more careful discussion of which will not be without profit even to such as are endowed with superior intelligence and quickness of apprehension.

Let us now examine the similitudes of Pharao and

his host and of the Lord's "company of horsemen." The comparison is not between the two armies, but only taken from them. For "what fellowship hath light with darkness? Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever?" But there is an evident analogy or ground for comparison between a holy and spiritual soul and the "horsemen" of the Lord, and between Pharao and Lucifer, and between the host of Egypt and the host of hell. Nor will you wonder, my brethren, that one soul is likened to a multitude of horsemen, if you bear in mind how many battalions of the virtues may be marshalled in a single soul, provided she has real sanctity, what orderly disposition she exhibits in her affections, what perfect discipline in her morals, what effective engines of war in her prayers, what energy in her actions, what power to inspire terror in her zeal, what constancy in her combats with the enemy, and, finally, what frequency in the succession of her triumphs. So, in a following verse, the Spouse, or the holy soul, is represented to be "terrible as an army set in array." And again we read, "What shalt thou see in the Sulamitess but the companies of camps?" But if this explanation fails to satisfy you, remember that the holy soul is never without a bodyguard—so to speak—of angels, who are jealous of her "with the jealousy of God," desirous to preserve her for the Bridegroom and to "present her as a chaste virgin to Christ." And let no one say in his heart, "Where are these protecting angels? Who has ever seen them?" For the Prophet Eliseus saw them, and by prayer obtained for his servant Giezi that he, also, should see them. If, then, you do not see them, it is because you are neither prophets nor the servants of a prophet.

They were also seen by the Patriarch Jacob, when he exclaimed, "These are the camps of God." And by the Doctor of nations, who said, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?"

Protected, therefore, by angelic ministrations, and attended wherever she goes by a troop of heavenly spirits, the holy soul may justly be likened to the horsemen of the Lord, those, namely, who, of old, assisted by a stupendous miracle of divine power, triumphed over the chariots of Pharao. For if you examine the matter carefully, you will find repeated in her conflict with the invisible Pharao all the glorious achievements which rendered the victory of the Red Sea so illustrious and wonderful. The single difference is one which makes the soul's triumph only all the more magnificent, since what the people of God accomplished in type and material figure has been spiritually fulfilled in her. Does it not appear to you a more valiant and glorious feat to vanquish the devil than to overcome King Pharao, to defeat the powers of the air than to overthrow the chariots of Egypt? In the one case the struggle was with flesh and blood, in the other the "wrestling" was "against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places." Let us together draw out and study the comparison in all its details. On the one side is the chosen people delivered from Egypt, on the other a soul rescued from the world; there Pharao is defeated, here it is Lucifer; there the chariots of the tyrant are overthrown, here are extinguished earthly and "carnal desires which war against the soul"; there the fight is carried on

amid floods of briny water, here amid floods of bitter tears. And I can fancy the demons, whenever they happen upon a faithful soul, crying out like the Egyptians of old, "Let us flee from Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them against us." Do you wish me now to designate by their proper names some of the captains of Pharao's host, and to describe some of the chariots, so that by adopting the method which I shall employ, you may be able to find out and identify all the others for yourselves? I tell you, then, that one of the mightiest princes of the spiritual and invisible Phaao is called Malice, another is named Luxury, and third Avarice. These govern their several provinces with dependence on the king, who defines for each the limits of his jurisdiction. Thus Malice has dominion over the whole territory of injury and outrage. Luxury presides over uncleanness and the sins of the flesh. To Avarice it has been given to rule the wide areas of rapine and fraud.

Attend now whilst I explain what manner of chariots Pharao has furnished his princes with for the pursuit of the people of God. The chariot of Malice moves upon four wheels, which are called Cruelty, Impatience, Audacity, and Impudence. For this chariot is extremely "swift to shed blood," and is neither stopped by innocence, nor retarded by patience, nor restrained by fear, nor held back by shame. It is drawn by two very mettlesome horses, ever ready to rush forward to all kinds of destruction and slaughter, and their names are Earthly Power and Worldly Pomp. For this four-wheeled car of Malice moves with the greatest velocity when, on the one hand, it is yoked to power adequate to the accomplishment of his malevolent

purposes, and, on the other, has the pomp and glory of popular favour to applaud his most criminal deeds. So that we see fulfilled in it the words of the Psalmist, "For the sinner is praised in the desires of his heart, and the unjust man is blessed." "And again, another Scripture saith," "This is your hour and the power of darkness." The horses are in charge of two charioteers, Pride and Envy, the former driving Pomp and the latter Power. For he who has allowed his heart within to swell with self-conceit shall soon be carried away swiftly by the love of satanical pomp. But the man that is firmly established in himself, who is prudently self-restrained, gravely modest, solidly humble, chastely whole, such a man is in no danger of being blown lightly about by the wind of vanity. In the same way, does it not seem to you that Envy rides upon the horse of Power and urges him onward by pricking his flanks with the two spurs of Jealousy, by which I mean the apprehension of death or decline, and the dread of deposition? For the fear of having soon to yield place to a successor is quite distinct from the fear of an invading usurper. Such then are the goads wherewith the horse of Power is driven forward. And that is all I find to say about the chariot of Malice.

The chariot of Luxury also runs upon four wheels of subservient vices, namely, Gluttony, Carnal Desire, Love of Fine Dress, and the Enervation begotten of languor and sloth. It, too, has its pair of horses to draw it, which are Prosperity in life and Abundance of earthly goods. These are driven by the charioteers, Lazy Languor and False Security; for abundance is the ruin of the lazy, and according to Scripture, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them," no doubt be-

cause it renders them falsely secure. "For when they shall say, peace and security, then shall sudden destruction come upon them." The charioteers of Luxury have neither whips nor spurs, nor anything at all of that kind; but they use a kind of parasol * to protect them from the sun, and a kind of fan for exciting a refreshing breeze. This parasol is nothing else than Dissimulation, which, in a metaphorical sense, makes a shade for the mind, and shelters it from the heat of care and worry. Now, it is characteristic of soft and effeminate souls to put aside even necessary and urgent cares, and to conceal themselves in the shadow of Dissimulation, lest they should feel the burning heat of solicitude. The fan bears the name of Profuse Liberality, and the wind that they produce is the balmy breeze of Adulation. For sensual souls affect prodigality, desirous to purchase for gold the light wind produced by the lips of flatterers. So much for the chariot of Lust.

Prince Avarice, similarly, has four wheels to his car. They are the vices of Pusillanimity, Inhumanity, Contempt of God, and Forgetfulness of Death. The horses that draw him are Obstinacy and Rapacity; and the two are managed by one driver, who is called Greed of Gain. For Avarice is singular in this, that he is content with one servant, his niggardliness not suffering him to employ any more. But his single driver displays admirable promptitude and tireless zeal in the execution of every order, using the rousing whips of Passion for Acquiring and Fear of Losing to stimulate the horses that draw him.

*Conopeum—κωνωπεῖον from κώνωψ—a gnat—was the name given to a fine gauze net used in Egypt as a protection against gnats or mosquitos. The English word, canopy, is evidently derived from it.—(Translator.)

Besides those I have mentioned, there are many other princes under the king of Egypt, who have likewise their own chariots for the service of their master. For instance, there is Pride, who is one of his greatest captains, and Impiety, the enemy of the true faith, who holds high rank in Pharao's palace and kingdom; whilst of nobles and knights of inferior degree the army of Egypt contains a countless multitude, whose names and offices and arms and equipments I leave you to discover for yourselves by your own meditations, for it will furnish profitable employment for your minds. It is therefore in the strength of these captains and their chariots that the invisible Pharao, like a cruel tyrant, vents his fury on the servants of the Lord, to the utmost of his power, rushing with rage upon them from every direction, and, even in our own day, is still pursuing the Israelites as they try to escape out of Egypt. The chosen people, on the other hand, have neither chariots in which to ride, nor arms wherewith to defend themselves; nevertheless, with no other protection but the Hand of the Lord, they can exclaim with confidence, "Let us sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously magnified, and horse and rider He hath thrown into the sea." And, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God." But perhaps I have now said enough on the comparison drawn from the horsemen of the Lord and the chariots of Pharao.*

* It is not impossible that the author of *Pilgrim's Progress* was indebted to this fine allegory for some suggestions in the composition of his masterpiece. Dr. Stebbing, in a note to his edition of Bunyan, admits that honest John was by no means as original as people generally suppose, and actually modelled his best-known work on a translation of a French production,

After using this similitude, the Bridegroom addresses the Spouse as His "love." He indeed was her Lover, even before her deliverance from the bondage of sin; for had He not loved her He certainly would not have set her free. But it was in consequence of the benefit of emancipation that she became His love, that is to say, filled with His love. Listen to herself bearing testimony to this truth, "not as though we had loved God, but because He hath first loved us." I now ask you, my brethren, to recall to mind the marriage of Moses to the daughter of the Madianite Raguel, and to recognise in that a foreshadowing of the spiritual union of Christ and the penitent soul. I also ask you to say, if you can, what it is you find most pleasant and consoling in your meditations on that sweetest of mysteries, whether the gracious condescension of the Word, or the inconceivable exaltation of the soul, or finally, the amazing confidence of the sinner. Moses was unable to render fair Sephora's swarthy complexion. But what he could not do for the Madianitess, Christ can and does accomplish for the soul He espouses. Hence we read in the following verse, "Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle dove's." But I reserve this for another sermon, so that we may always partake with eager appetites of the good things set before us on the Bridegroom's table, and then pour out our souls unto the praise and glory of Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

entitled *Les trois Pélerinages.* Now, the author of this book was a Cistercian monk, one Guillaume de Guilleville, who died in 1360, in the abbey of Chalis. He must therefore have been familiar with the writings of his great Patron, and doubtless derived therefrom his inspiration.—(Translator.)

SERMON XL

On the Cheeks of the Spouse and what constitutes their Beauty.

" Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle dove's."

The Spouse, my brethren, is extremely bashful and sensitive. Hence, as it appears to me, she must have blushed scarlet at the sharp reproof of her Beloved, and, looking more lovely than ever in her embarrassment, merited to hear from Him, immediately, the eulogium, " Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle dove's." But you must not take these words in a materialistic sense, as if there were question here of the visible blush on mortal flesh, arising from the even diffusion of a corruptible fluid, ruddy or crimson, close beneath the superficies of a pale and transparent skin ; for it is the mixing and combining of these colours in due proportion that produce the red-and-white complexion which adorns the face with physical beauty. The soul is an immaterial and invisible substance, possessing neither distinction of bodily members, nor capacity for the ornamentation of sensible colours. Try, then, as best you can, to conceive a spiritual essence in a spiritual way ; and, to preserve the aptness of the similitude proposed, understand the face of the soul to be the intention of the mind. For it is from the intention that we estimate the merit of a work, just as the beauty of the body is judged from the face. Consider, moreover, that the blush which suffuses the

soul's face is nothing else than her modesty, which is compared to a blush, because it, in an especial way, enhances her beauty and increases her grace. Therefore is it said to her, "Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle dove's." It would indeed be more in conformity with usage to speak of the face and to describe it as beautiful; for, according to custom, whenever we wish to praise anyone on account of her beauty, we say, "she has a lovely" or "a beautiful face." But, although I am not sure what it is, I nevertheless feel quite certain that the Bridegroom has something very particular in view in preferring to mention the cheeks. For we must remember that He Who speaks is the Spirit of Wisdom, and it would be impious to suppose that He could use words without significance, or otherwise than they ought to be used. Therefore, whatever it is, a reason there certainly must be why He chooses to refer to the cheeks in the plural, rather than to the face in the singular. And, if you can suggest nothing more plausible, I will offer for your consideration the explanation which occurs to me.

There are two things, my brethren, necessarily implied in every act of intention (which, as I have said, is the face of the soul) and these are the object and the motive, that is to say, what you intend and the reason that determines you. Now it is according to these two elements that the beauty or deformity of the soul is estimated; so that a soul wherein both are pure and righteous is judged to be beautiful and deserves to have applied to her the words, "Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle dove's." But should she be found defective in one or other, then it would be no longer true to say to her, "Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle dove's,"

because of the partial deformity which she exhibits. Much less can this eulogium be applied to the soul which has neither a good object nor a good motive in her intentions. All this will appear more evident from examples. If a person, for instance, gives up his mind to the investigation of truth, and that purely from the love of truth, does it not seem to you that in his case both the object and the motive are equally excellent and that he has every right to apply to himself the words of the Bridegroom, "Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle dove's"? For in neither of the cheeks of the soul that is such, does there appear any spot or speck of evil. But were a soul to apply herself to the quest after truth, not for the sake of truth, but from the desire of vainglory, or with a view to some temporal advantage, although one of her cheeks, viz., the object of her intention, appears vested with beauty, yet because the other has been defiled by the baseness of the motive, I have no doubt you would pronounce her at least partially deformed. And if you were to see another soul devoting her energies to no honourable object, but sunk in sensuality, given up completely to the pleasures of the table and the delights of the flesh, as being one of those "whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things," what would be your verdict on her? Would you not declare her to be repulsive in both cheeks, as having at once a bad motive and a bad object in her intention?

It is, consequently, a mark of a worldly soul, both of whose cheeks are devoid of beauty, to make the world rather than God the object of her intention. The hypocritical soul, on the contrary, is characterised by the fact that she does indeed, at least in some sense, direct

her intention towards God, yet not for the sake of God. And although this divine regard, such as it is, seems to beautify one of her cheeks, the insincerity of her piety destroys all her attractions and spreads the deformity of ugliness over her whole face. Again, to turn to God either solely or principally for the sake of the necessaries of this present life, renders the soul—I will not say defiled with the filth of hypocrisy, but deficient in the brightness of purity—the effect of pusillanimity—and consequently less acceptable. On the other hand, to aim at something other than God, yet on account of God, is not indeed the peaceful repose of Mary, but rather the busy solicitude of Martha. But God forbid that I should assert the existence of any deformity in such a soul. Yet neither would I affirm that she has attained to the perfection of spiritual beauty, because she is still "careful and troubled about many things," and cannot but be sprinkled, however slightly, with the dust of earthly occupations.* However, such inconsiderable stains will be easily and quickly removed, at least in the hour of a holy death, by the merit of a pure intention and the testimony of a good conscience towards God. Therefore, she alone, whose intention is directed to God for His own sake, exhibits absolute beauty in both cheeks. And this is proper and special to the Spouse, who by reason of her singular prerogative, deserves to be saluted by her Bridegroom with the words, "Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle dove's."

* "Et non potest terrenorum actuum vel tenui pulvere non respergi," with which compare the words of St. Leo the Great in his fourth Lenten sermon: "Dum per varias actiones vitae hujus sollicitudo distenditur, necesse est de mundano pulvere etiam religiosa corda sordescere."—(Translator.)

But why is she compared to the turtle dove? No doubt, because this bird is remarkable for shyness, does not consort with many, and is said to be content with the company of a single mate; and if she should lose him, she seeks no other, but leads thereafter a solitary life. Do you, therefore, my brethren, who are listening to me, lest you should hear to no purpose what has been written for your good, and is now for your good being examined and discussed—do you, I say, moved by these exhortations of the Holy Spirit, and animated with an ardent desire to discover how you may make your souls the spouses of Christ, study to beautify the two cheeks of your intention, that, after the example of the turtle dove, the most modest of birds, you may sit solitary, as the Prophet Jeremias says, because you have raised yourselves above yourselves. For surely it is to be raised above yourselves to be espoused to the Lord of angels. Are you not raised above yourselves when you cleave to God and are made one Spirit with Him? Sit solitary, then, like the turtle dove. Have nothing to do with the throng, nothing in common with the multitude of men. O holy soul, even "forget thy people and thy father's house, and the King shall greatly desire thy beauty." Remain alone, and amongst all preserve thyself for Him alone, Who has chosen thee from amongst all. Shun the public view; shun even the members of thine own household; withdraw from the company of friends and familiars, even from him who ministers to thy necessities. Knowest thou not that thy Beloved is of a shy disposition, and will not lend thee His presence in the presence of others? Seek solitude, therefore, not of the body, but of the mind

and of the spirit, solitude in intention and in devotion. For "a Spirit before thy face is Christ the Lord," and what He requires of thee is not a physical but a spiritual isolation. Nevertheless, thou wouldst do well to withdraw thyself in body as well from time to time, according to thy opportunity, and especially at the hour of prayer. Thou hast for this also both the precept and the example of thy Beloved. "But thou," He says, "when thou shalt pray, enter thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret." And what He preached to others, He practised Himself. He used to pass the night alone in prayer, separating Himself not only from the crowds, but also from every one of His disciples, not even excepting His most familiar friends. When of His own accord He was hastening to meet death, He took with Him the three apostles with whom He was most intimate. But He retired even from their company when He wished to pray. Therefore, do thou act similarly when thou wouldst give thyself to the exercise of prayer.

For the rest, nothing more is enjoined you, my brethren, but the solitude of mind and of spirit. You are alone in this way, when you exclude the thought of common things, and all attachment to present things; when you contemn what the many admire, and count as nothing what they eagerly covet; when you avoid disputes, make light of temporal losses and forget injuries. Otherwise, you will not be really alone, even when you have no visible company. Or do you not understand that one can be alone although surrounded by a multitude and, contrariwise, one can be in the company of many when exteriorly alone? You are alone, my brethren, no matter what number are with you, pro-

vided you are careful neither to inquire too curiously into the conduct of your neighbour, nor rashly to sit in judgment upon his doings. And if you happen to discover some fault in him, even so, beware of condemning, but rather excuse. At least excuse the intention, if you cannot excuse the act. Believe that what appears blameworthy is due to ignorance, or to surprise, or to mere accident. But if the guilt is so manifest that you cannot shut your eyes to it, still do your best to extenuate what you are unable to excuse, and say to yourselves, "The temptation no doubt was exceedingly strong. What would have become of me were I subjected to a similar trial?" And remember that it is to the Spouse I have been speaking thus, not to the friend of the Bridegroom.* For the latter has the special duty of keeping diligent watch to prevent sin on the part of his charge, of examining whether sin has been committed, and, if so, of administering due correction. But the Spouse is under no such obligation and lives to herself alone and to Him Whom she loves, her Bridegroom and her Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

* By the friend of the Bridegroom the Saint evidently means a religious Superior, who is responsible for the conduct of those committed to his care.—(Translator.)

SERMON XLI

On what is meant by the Neck of the Spouse and by the Chains of Gold promised Her.

"Thy neck (is) as jewels; we will make thee chains of gold inlaid with silver."

"Thy neck (is) as jewels." It is more usual, my brethren, for the neck to be adorned with jewels than to be compared to them. But the reason why people wear necklaces of jewels is because, having no beauty of their own, they are obliged to borrow from outer objects wherewith to simulate what nature denied them. Such is not the case with the Spouse of Christ. Her neck is in itself so beautiful and so perfectly formed by nature that it has no need of artificial embellishments. For why should that be decorated with the mendacious splendour of foreign hues, which possesses in itself a sufficiency of native and intrinsic loveliness, so much, in fact, as to rival the beauty of whatever jewels might be used to adorn it? This is what the Bridegroom gives us to understand when He says, not "Thy neck is *encircled with* jewels," but "Thy neck is *as* jewels" Here we must implore the light of the Holy Spirit, that, as He enabled us to discover the spiritual cheeks of the Spouse, He would also deign to show us what is to be understood by her spiritual neck. As for me, who am under obligation to tell you what I think, the most probable and satisfactory ex-

planation I have been so far able to find is to suppose that by the name of neck is here designated the intellect of the soul. And I venture to think you will agree with me in this view, when you examine the reason of the comparison. For do you not perceive that the intellect discharges for the soul functions analogous to those which the neck performs for the body, since it is through the intellect that all spiritual food passes into the soul, and is conveyed to the digestive organs of the will and the affections? The neck of the Spouse, therefore, understood in this sense, that is, the pure intellect, has no need of any borrowed embellishments, being sufficiently adorned with its simple and naked truth. Rather it is itself the beauty of the soul, as a most precious ornament, and for this reason it is likened to jewels. For truth is a priceless jewel; and so are purity and simplicity; and so is the wisdom that is "unto sobriety." But the intellect of philosophers and heretics possesses in itself none of the splendours of purity and truth, and hence they are at such pains to deck it out and to set it off with the trumpery of grand words and syllogistic sophistry, lest, by showing itself as it really is, the turpitude of its falsity should be also made manifest.

It is added, "We will make thee chains of gold, inlaid with silver." If it were said in the singular, "I will make," and not in the plural, "we will make," I should pronounce absolutely and unhesitatingly that the Bridegroom is the speaker here also. But consider now whether these words would not be better and more fittingly attributed to His companions, who are, as it were, trying to console the Spouse with a promise that, as she cannot yet attain to the vision of Him for Whose

presence she pines, they will make for her beautiful and costly chains, as ornaments for her ears. The reason why she is especially promised ear-pendants is, as I think, because "faith cometh by hearing." It also reminds us that as long as we walk by faith and not by sight, it is more important and necessary to exercise the ear in listening to instruction than the eye in contemplation. For it is useless to strain the sight if the heart be not purified by faith, since it is only to the clean of heart that the vision of God is promised. Hence it is written "purifying their hearts by faith." Therefore, inasmuch as "faith cometh by hearing," and by faith the purification of the sight, rightly do the companions of the Bridegroom apply themselves particularly to the task of adorning the ears of the Spouse. For reason itself teaches us that hearing is a preparation for vision. "Thou, O Spouse of Christ," we may fancy them saying, "art longing impatiently to contemplate thy Beloved in His glory. But this happiness is reserved for the other life. Meantime we will present thee with ornaments for thine ears, which shall be a consolation to thee whilst thou art waiting, and a preparation for the favour thou hast solicited." Or they may be supposed to address her in the words of the Psalmist, "'Hearken, O daughter, and see.' Thou dost desire to see, but first it is necessary to hearken. Hearing is the way to sight. Hearken, then, and incline thine ear,' for the ornaments which we make for thee, that through the obedience of faith thou may attain to the glory of vision. To thy hearing we will 'give joy and gladness.' But to grant thee the satisfaction of sight, wherein consist the perfection of happiness and the fulfilment of thy desires, belongs not to us, but

to Him Whom thy soul loveth. He will show Himself to thee that thy joy may be full. He 'will fill thee with joy with His Countenance.' But in the meantime, until thou attain to these 'delights at His Right Hand even to the end,' receive for thy consolation these ornaments from our hands."

We must now consider, my brethren, what kind are the chains they offer her. "Chains of gold," we read, "inlaid with silver." By gold we are to understand the brightness of the Divinity and also the "wisdom which is from above." It is therefore of such immaterial gold that the heavenly artificers, who are charged with this ministry, promise to make for the Spouse resplendent seals, as it were, of truth, and to fit them on the internal ears of her soul. This, as I take it, means nothing else than that they purpose to devise certain spiritual representations, by means of which they will present to the view of the soul, whilst she is engaged in contemplation, the purest images of the Divine Wisdom; in order that she may be able to see, at least "through a glass in a dark manner," Him Whom it is not yet given her to behold face to face. These things, which I speak of, are altogether divine, and absolutely unintelligible except to those who have experienced them. For without the experience it is impossible to understand how it is that, whilst we are still in this body of corruption and walking by faith, with the glory of the Divinity still veiled from our view, the contemplation of pure truth nevertheless presumes to exercise its functions, at least in part and occasionally; so that each of us, on whom God has bestowed this extraordinary favour, may boldly say with the Apostle, "Now I know in part," and "We know in part and we

prophesy in part." But whenever the soul, transported out of herself, is thus granted a clearer vision * of the Divine Majesty, yet only for a moment and with the velocity, so to speak, of the lightning flash, there are suddenly presented to her imagination, from what source I know not, certain images of inferior objects, which admirably help and harmonise with the higher

* Of the same experience, apparently, St. Theresa writes: "Whilst the soul is in this ecstasy, our Lord favours her by discovering to her secrets, such as heavenly mysteries and imaginary visions. . . . Though the recipient is incapable of describing them, they are deeply imprinted in the centre of the soul and are never forgotten. . . . I think God ravishes the soul completely into Himself as His very own and His Bride, and shows her some small part of the kingdom she has won." St. John of the Cross: "It is as if God drew back some of the many veils and coverings that are before her (the soul) so that she might see what He is. Then indeed, but still obscurely, because all the veils are not drawn back—that of faith remaining—the Divine Face, full of grace, bursts through and shines." St. Alphonsus Rodriguez: "It seems as if the Almighty desired to make Himself known as He does to the blessed in heaven. The soul forgets all earthly things and her own self, because she is solely occupied in loving God, Who is intimately present to her, and as though face to face." Blessed Angela of Foligno: "When the Most High God cometh into the soul, it is at times given her to see Him, and she seeth Him within her, without any bodily shape." Alvarez de Paz: "In this degree, which is the highest, eyes are given to the soul that she may see God. God manifests Himself to the soul by an image that represents Him very perfectly." As to the duration of this vision, St. Theresa says: "As it seems to me, the period of time, however long it may have been, during which the faculties of the soul are entranced, is very short. If half an hour, that would be a long time." St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, like St. Bernard, uses the image of the lightning flash: "A heavenly light shone for an instant, as a flash of lightning, and with a majesty that compelled my admiration, I saw thereby the immensity of the Divine Essence." Similarly, St. Gregory and other mystical writers.—See Poulain, *Graces of Prayer*, pp. 266-282.—(Translator.)

impression of the Divinity. These imaginative representations are intended, no doubt, both to temper the excessive splendour of the Light Uncreated and to facilitate its communication ; for they intercept that most pure and dazzling ray of Divine Truth, like clouds before the face of the sun, render it more tolerable to the soul, and more capable of being transmitted to whomsoever we please. In my opinion, they are formed in our minds by the inspirations of holy angels, just as evil imaginations are unquestionably suggested by the wicked spirits.

And perhaps we have here that darksome mirror through which, as you have read, the Apostle gazed, and which is fashioned, so it seems, by angelic hands out of such pure and beautiful images. Thus we may ascribe to God that representation of spiritual truth which in itself is quite distinct from any phantasy of corporeal properties, whilst we attribute to the ministry of angels all the splendid imagery with which it appears surrounded and clothed. In a different reading of the same text this seems to be more clearly indicated. According to that version the companions of the Bridegroom say, " We, the artificers, will make for thee images of gold, with distinctions or ornaments of silver." * The phrases, " inlaid with silver " and " with ornaments of silver " do not differ in meaning. To my mind this appears to signify that not only do the holy angels form within us, by suggestion, the imaginative representations referred to, but they even supply us with suitable words to express what they have enabled us to conceive ; so that our ideas, dressed

* " Ομοιώματα χρυσίου ποιήσομέν σοι μετὰ στιγμάτων τοῦ αργυρίου." $a^{\perp}$ 11 in the Septuagint Version. — (Translator.)

out in apt and becoming language, may be comprehended by our hearers with greater ease and pleasure. But you may object and say to me, "What is there in common between silver and language?" Well, the Psalmist shall give you the answer: "The words of the Lord," he says, "are pure words, as silver tried by the fire." It is in this sense, then, that the ministering spirits of heaven make for the Spouse, whilst she sojourns upon earth, "chains of gold, inlaid with silver."

But observe, my brethren, how the Spouse asks one thing and obtains another. She longs for the repose of contemplation, only to have enjoined on her the laborious office of preaching. She thirsts for her Bridegroom's presence, and is charged with the anxious duty of bringing forth and nourishing children for Him. Nor is this the only occasion she has been so treated. Once before, as I recollect, she met with a similar rebuff. She was sighing for the embraces and the kisses of her Beloved, but received the answer, "For thy breasts are better than wine," by which she was reminded of her motherhood, and of the duty of suckling her little ones and fostering her children. Perhaps you will discover for yourselves further instances in other verses of this Canticle, if you are willing to seek them out. Do we not find the same thing prefigured of old in the history of the holy patriarch Jacob, when he was defrauded of the long expected and eagerly desired embraces of her whom he loved, the fruitful and blear-eyed Lia being substituted, without his knowledge or consent, for the beautiful but barren Rachel? In the same way here, the Spouse, desiring to know and asking where her Beloved pastures and reposes in the noonday, instead of the information solicited, receives

"chains of gold, inlaid with silver," that is, wisdom and eloquence, doubtless for the office of preaching.

We learn from this, my brethren, that the kisses of divine contemplation must be often interrupted for the purpose of giving suck to the little ones, and that no one ought to live for himself alone, but all for all. Woe to those who have received the capacity for conceiving worthy sentiments of God and fittingly expressing them, if they look upon religion as a source of gain, if they make subservient to vainglory the talents entrusted to them to be employed in the service of their Master, if they are high-minded and unwilling to condescend to the humble! Let them fear lest what the Lord says by the mouth of the Prophet Osee should apply to themselves, "I gave them My gold and My silver; but they have used My gold and My silver in the service of Baal." * Listen now to the answer which the Spouse makes on receiving thus a reproof from her Bridegroom and a promise from His companions. She is neither angered by the one nor elated by the other, but behaves in accordance with what is written, "Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee," and, with reference to gifts and promises, "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things." That she regulated her conduct by these counsels will appear from her reply. But, with your leave, I shall make that the text of another sermon. Meantime, let what has been said excite us to glorify the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

* "Dedi eis aurum meum et argentum meum, ipsi autem de argento meo et de auro meo operati sunt Baal." This is either taken from some unknown version, or quoted incorrectly. The text most like it in the Vulgate is Osee ii. 8: "Argentum multiplicavi ei et aurum, quae fecerunt Baal."—(Translator.)

SERMON XLII

On Submission to Correction, and the two Kinds of Humility.

"While the King was at His repose, my spikenard sent forth the odours thereof."

"While the King was at His repose, my spikenard sent forth the odour thereof." These, my brethren, are the words of the Spouse, the discussion of which I postponed until to-day. This is the answer she made when rebuked by her Bridegroom. Yet it is addressed, not to Him, but to His companions, as you may clearly see from the words themselves. For she does not say, speaking in the second person, "While Thou, O King, wast at Thy repose"; but, "While the King was at His repose," which makes it evident that she is speaking, not to Him, but only of Him. We may suppose, then, that the Bridegroom, after reprimanding and humbling the Spouse, as we have seen, perceiving her extreme confusion from the blush which mantled her cheeks, withdrew from the company, in order to give her an opportunity of speaking her mind freely in His absence, and, in case she should pass from excessive boldness to excessive timidity and depression of mind, as commonly happens, that she might receive consolation and encouragement from the charity of His companions. Yet He did not neglect to comfort her Himself as far as He judged it necessary at the time. For to make it manifest how pleasing she was to Him, even whilst

He corrected her, inasmuch as she bore that correction patiently and in the proper spirit, He could not leave her until He broke forth in praise of her—out of the abundant love, no doubt, with which His Heart was filled—and spoke in admiration of her beautiful cheeks and neck. Therefore, His companions also, who have remained with her, address her in words of gracious kindness and offer her presents, knowing this to be the will of their Lord. Hence, it is to them that she directs her answer. Such, I think, is the literal sense and the sequence of our present text.

But before proceeding to extract the kernel of spiritual truth from this shell of literal meaning, I wish to make one brief remark. Happy the superior whose reprimands are received in that spirit of humble submission of which we have here so perfect a model! Would to God there was no necessity for reprimands at all! That would be better still. But since "in many things we all offend," it is not permitted me to keep silence, having an obligation in virtue of my office, and a still more urgent impulse from fraternal charity, to reprove transgressors. But if I administer a reproof and so do my part, and if that reproof, proceeding from me, instead of accomplishing its purpose, and correcting the fault to which it was applied, should return to me empty, like a dart which impinges on a hard substance and rebounds, what think you, my brethren, shall be then my feelings? Shall I not be filled with grief and anguish? And to borrow something from the words of my master, St. Paul, since my own wisdom suffices me not, "I am straitened between two and what I shall choose I know not," whether to approve of my action in making the correction, as being only what I was

bound to do; or to repent of it, because it has not succeeded according to my desires and expectations. It was my design to slay an enemy and to deliver a brother. But so far from accomplishing this, my zeal has produced just the contrary effect. For it has wounded my brother's soul and increased his guilt by adding contempt of authority to his original fault. "The house of Israel," says the Lord through His Prophet Ezechiel, "will not hearken to thee because they will not hearken to Me." See now, my brother, what is the Majesty which thou hast treated with contempt. Do not imagine thou art despising only me. The Lord has spoken it, and what He said to Israel by His Prophet, He repeated with His own Lips to His apostles, in the words, "He that despiseth you despiseth Me." I am not indeed a prophet, nor am I an apostle. Nevertheless, I dare to say it, I hold the office and discharge the duties of both a prophet and an apostle. I am burdened with the cares and responsibilities of those who are far beyond me by the merit of their lives. Although it be to my own great confusion, although it be to my own awful danger, although I cannot pretend to rival the Lawgiver's virtue or to equal him in grace, still I sit on the chair of Moses. What then? Is that chair less deserving of respect and submission because it is occupied by one unworthy? Surely not. Even if it were Scribes and Pharisees that sat on it we have still the command of Christ: "What they say, do ye."

As a rule, in such cases, impatience is added to contempt. Not only does the person reprimanded refuse to correct his fault, but he even manifests anger against the superior who has reproved him, like the frenzied patient who repels the hand of the physician,

Strange perversity! He is angry with the friend who comes to heal, but shows no indignation with the enemy who has hurt him! For there is an enemy who with his arrows "shoots in the dark the upright of heart," and it is he who has now wounded thee even unto death. Dost thou feel no resentment against him? And art thou enraged against me, whose only desire is to make thee whole? "Be angry," says the Psalmist, "and sin not." If thy anger be directed against thy sin, not only dost thou not sin anew, but thy previous sin is blotted out. But now thou refusest the remedy and thy sin remains. Yes, thou addest sin to sin by giving way to unreasonable anger, and that is a sin of exceeding malice.

Sometimes this anger is accompanied with impudence. The person who is reproved, not satisfied with showing resentment against his superior, goes so far as to defend impudently the fault for which he has been corrected. The man who acts thus has evidently become reckless and lost to shame. It is of such that the Lord said by the Prophet Jeremias, "Thou hadst a harlot's forehead, thou wouldst not blush," and by Ezechiel, "My jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will cease and be angry no more." The very sound of these words makes me tremble. Do you not perceive from them, my brethren, how dangerous, how horrible, how dreadful a thing it is to attempt to justify one's own sin? In another place He says, "Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise." Therefore, if the jealousy and anger of God have abandoned thee, so has His love. One who is deemed unworthy of His chastisement, will certainly be considered undeserving of His love. "Let us have pity on the wicked," He says, "but he will not learn

to do justice." Far from me be such pity! Such pity is more to be dreaded than the fiercest anger, since it blocks up against the sinner the path to justification. It were much better, according to the advice of the Psalmist, to "embrace discipline, lest at any time the Lord be angry, and you perish from the just way." I pray thee, O Father of mercies, to exercise Thy anger against me, only let it be the anger wherewith Thou dost correct the sinner, not that by which Thou shuttest him out eternally from the way of justice.* The first kind of anger visits us in love, of which it is the offspring; but the second is fostered and concealed under a dissimulation that should inspire us with terror. It is not, therefore, when I do not feel Thy wrath, but when I groan beneath its weight, that I ought to be most confident of Thy favour; for "when Thou art angry Thou wilt remember mercy." "Thou wast a merciful God to them," said the Psalmist, "and taking vengeance on all their inventions." He is speaking of Moses, and Aaron, and Samuel, whose names he had just mentioned. And notice how he calls it a mercy that God did not spare them for their transgressions. And wilt thou, my brother, put away from thee for ever this mercy, by attempting to justify thy sin and resenting correction? Is not that the same as calling evil good and good evil? Will not this detestable impudence gradually lead to impenitence, the mother of despair? For how can one repent of that which he believes to be good? The Prophet denounces woe against them who thus confound good with evil. And that woe is eternal. There is a great difference between

* This sounds like an echo of St. Augustine's celebrated petition, "Hic caedo, hic ure, ut in aeternum parcas."—(Translator.)

him who is "tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured," and the man who, of his own will and choice, pursues evil as good, and in a state of fatal security, hastens to death as if he were going to life. In the case of persons of the latter class, I confess that I sometimes could have wished I had dissembled and kept silence about the faults I observed them committing, instead of administering correction which they have made the occasion of such utter ruin.

You will tell me, perhaps, that I have the merit of my good action, even though it has failed to benefit the transgressor; that by discharging my duty I have delivered, at least, my own soul from sin; that "I am innocent of the blood of this man," whom I have warned and exhorted, that he might turn aside from his evil ways and live. But no matter how you multiply such motives for comfort, I refuse to be consoled whilst I see my child dying before my very eyes. As if forsooth I sought my own deliverance in that reprehension and not rather his! What mother could restrain her tears even though conscious that she had spared no pains or trouble to save her infant, if, nevertheless, she now sees herself defeated, and all her efforts unavailing, and the little one already at the point of death? And if her tears are allowed to flow unchecked for the loss of a temporal life, surely I may give myself up to "lamentation and great mourning" over the eternal death of a son, even though my conscience can reproach me with no negligence in his regard. On the other hand, you see, my brethren, from how much misery that religious saves both himself and his superior, who, when reprimanded, answers with meekness, confesses with humility, submits with patience, and obeys with

modest simplicity. To one like this, I acknowledge myself a debtor in everything. I am willing to be the servant and slave of such a soul, as of my Lord's most worthy Spouse, who can say with all truth, "While the King was at His repose, my spikenard sent forth the odour thereof."

Humility, my brethren, exhales a good odour, which, ascending up from this valley of tears, spreads itself around in every direction, and even perfumes the royal bedchamber with its sweet fragrance. Now, spikenard is a lowly plant; moreover, they who make it their business to study carefully the virtues and properties of herbs, declare it to be of a warm nature. Therefore it seems to me that it can be taken here very fittingly as symbolising the virtue of humility, but only that humility which is heated with the fervour of holy love. The reason of this distinction is that there is a humility which truth begets in us, and which is without warmth; and a humility which is produced and inflamed by charity. The former is resident in the intellect; the latter has its seat in the affections of the will. Thus, if a man considers himself interiorly by the light of truth, without any dissimulation, and pronounces upon himself an unbiassed judgment, I have no doubt he will be humbled, even in his own eyes, and lowered in his own estimation, although he may not yet be willing to lose the esteem of others. He will consequently have humility, but so far only as the effect of truth, not from the infusion of charity. For were he not merely enlightened by the splendour of that truth which gives him a real and salutary knowledge of himself, but also possessed with the love of it, he doubtless would desire, as far as is proper, that others should

have the same opinion of him which he has himself and which he knows in his heart to be the truth. I say advisedly, as far as is proper, because, generally speaking, it is not expedient that others know as much about us as we know ourselves. Both the love of truth and the truth of love forbid us to desire the publication of facts the knowledge of which would injure our neighbour. On the other hand, he who, from purely selfish motives, keeps locked up in his own mind the verdict of truth upon himself, makes it plain to all how little he loves the truth, since he is thus ready to sacrifice it to personal honour or temporal gain.

You observe then, my brethren, that a man may have a really humble opinion of himself, and yet be unwilling to "consent to the humble," as the Apostle says. For these two things are quite distinct; the former coming from the light of truth, the latter from the grace of charity. The former results by necessity, the latter is the production of free-will. Of the Saviour we are told that "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant," and giving us the form and pattern of humility. "He emptied Himself" as "He humbled Himself," not by any necessity of truth and judgment, but from charity to us. He had the power to exhibit Himself as vile and contemptible, but He certainly could not so repute Himself, since He knew Himself as He truly was. His humility therefore had its source in His Will, not in His Intellect. He made Himself appear other than He recognised Himself to be, freely choosing to be esteemed the least, whilst fully conscious that He was the greatest. Then He tells us, "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." Notice how He says "humble of heart,"

that is, "humble in the affection of My Heart and by the choice of My Will." So He denies the necessity of His humility, by ascribing it to His Will. For in this He was not like you and me, who find ourselves in very truth deserving of contempt and dishonour, worthy of all abasement and subjection, worthy even of severe chastisement and hard stripes. Yet He submitted to all these things, "because it was His own will," and because He was "humble of heart." That is to say, He was humble with that humility which is embraced with the heart's affection, not with that which results of necessity from the knowledge of the truth.*

It is for this reason, my brethren, I said a while ago that this kind of voluntary humility is produced in our souls, not by the constraining evidence of truth, but rather by the infusion of love, because it belongs to the heart, to the will, and to the affections. Whether I am right in assigning it to such a source, I leave it to you to judge. It is also for you to consider and decide whether I have correctly attributed the same kind of humility to the Saviour, Who, as is certain,

* In his treatise *De gradibus humilitatis*, St. Bernard defines humility as the virtue which gives a man a clear knowledge and a contempt of his baseness ("virtus qua quis, verissima sui cognitione, sibi ipse vilescit"). Now, it is clear that such a virtue, implying imperfection, can have no place in Christ as He is God. As Man, He could (and therefore did) possess humility both of intellect and of will, for even though, so regarded, He was the noblest of creatures, He was still but a creature, and as such infinitely inferior to the Creator. But in comparison with other men—and this is the case our Saint seems to be considering—Christ could, indeed, and did exercise humility of the will, by submitting to indignities He did not deserve, yet He certainly was incapable of intellectual humility, knowing Himself to be "Lord and Master," and, by natural right, the Only Sinless.—(Translator.)

"emptied Himself" through charity; through charity made Himself "a little less than the angels"; through charity was subject to His parents; through charity stooped to receive baptism at the hands of John; through charity submitted to the infirmities of the flesh; and finally, it was through charity that He became obedient unto death, even unto the shameful death of the cross. Another question awaiting your determination is whether I am right in supposing that this humility, all aglow with the fervour of charity, is here typified by spikenard, an herb whose nature is said to be as warm as its appearance is contemptible. And if you agree with me in all these questions (as indeed you cannot help doing, since you cannot withhold assent from evidence so clear) then if you feel humbled in your own consciences with that constrained humility, which truth, which "searcheth the heart and the reins," produces in the mind of a reflective soul, exert your wills and make a virtue of necessity; because there can be no virtue without the concurrence of the will. You will do this by not desiring to appear to others different from what you appear interiorly to your own hearts. Otherwise you have good reason to fear lest what you read in the Psalmist should apply to yourselves: "For in His sight he hath done deceitfully, that his iniquity may be found unto hatred," and in Proverbs, "Diverse weights and diverse measures, both are abominable before God." For does not he, who wishes to appear better than he knows himself to be, incur the guilt of "doing deceitfully" and using "diverse weights and diverse measures"? He depreciates himself in the secret chamber of his own judgment, having weighed his worth in the scales of truth; yet exteriorly he pre-

tends to be of higher value, and sells himself as possessing greater weight than he finds registered in the balance of conscience. Fear the All-seeing Judge, my brethren, and never be guilty of so wicked a crime as to lift yourselves up with your wills whilst you feel yourselves being pressed down by truth. For that would be sinning against the light. It would be resisting God. Rather acquiesce in the divine judgment, and subject your wills to reason, and that not only with docility, but even with devotion. Say to yourselves with the Psalmist, "Shall not my soul be subject to God?"

But it is not enough to be subject to God, unless you are willing to "be subject to every human creature for God's sake, whether it be to" the abbot, "as excelling," or to the prior, as appointed by him. I will go further and exhort you to be subject to your equals, yea, even to your inferiors; "for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice." Do thou, then, my brother, if thou desirest to be perfect in justice, "with honour prevent" him that is less, defer to thy inferiors, place thyself beneath thy juniors. By acting thus, thou also wilt deserve to say with the Spouse, "My spikenard sent forth the odour thereof." For thy devotion is a good odour, a good odour, too, is thy fair fame, which reaches and edifies all, so that in every place thou art "the good odour of Christ," regarded by all with love and veneration. He who is humble, not in the free affection of his will, but merely as the effect of the compelling power of truth, cannot exercise the same influence. Such a one keeps his humility altogether to himself; he does not suffer it to escape that it may spread itself abroad and perfume his surroundings. In fact, it would be better

to say that humility of this kind has no odour, because it has no charity or devotion, as being the product of necessity rather that the result of willing choice. But the humility of the Spouse (which alone is symbolised by spikenard) glowing with charity, enlivened with devotion, redolent of good fame, scatters its fragrance on every side. It has the properties of voluntariness, constancy, and fertility, and its odour can be extinguished by neither praise nor blame. The Spouse has heard from her Bridegroom the eulogy, "Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle dove's"; she has also received a promise of ornaments of gold; and nevertheless she answers with humility. And the more she is honoured and praised, the more does she humble herself in all things. She does not glory in her merits; nor does she forget her lowliness whilst she hears herself commended, but rather humbly proclaims it under the symbol of spikenard. It is indeed as if she spoke in the words of the Virgin Mary, "I am conscious to myself of nothing that could deserve so great a condescension, beyond the fact that the Lord 'hath regarded the humility of His handmaid.'" For what else can be the meaning of the words, "my spikenard sent forth the odour thereof," if not "my humility has been pleasing to God"? As if she should say, "It is not by the merit of wisdom I have won the divine favour, nor by the nobility of blood, nor yet by beauty of person, for I make no pretension to such advantages; it is simply because my humility, the sole good quality I can claim to possess, 'sent forth the odour thereof.'" That is to say, its usual, characteristic odour. For it is usual with humility to be acceptable to God; as it is usual with Him, and, as it were, His custom, to look

down with favour upon the humble from His "high and elevated throne." And therefore, "while the King was at His repose," the odour of humility penetrated even to His bedchamber. "Who is as the Lord our God," cries out the Psalmist, "Who dwelleth on high, and looketh down on the low things in heaven and in earth?"

Therefore, "while the King was at His repose," the spikenard of His Spouse gave forth its odour. The King takes His repose on the Bosom of His Father, because the Son is always in the Father. And doubt not, my brethren, that He will show Himself a gracious Monarch, since He reposes everlastingly on the bed, so to speak, of the Father's benignity. It is only natural that the cry of the humble should mount up to Him Whose home is in the very Well-Spring of piety, to Whom sweetness is essential, to Whom goodness is substantial, or rather, consubstantial, Whose whole Being is so wholly from the Father, that trembling humility need suspect in His royal Majesty the presence of nothing that is not paternal. Besides, we have the pledge, "By reason of the misery of the needy, and the groans of the poor, now will I arise, saith the Lord." The Spouse, consequently, well aware of this promise, as being one of His household and especially beloved, has no fears of being excluded from her Bridegroom's favour on account of her poverty of merit, because she places all her hope in her humility. But as she is still mindful of His sharp reproof, she does not now venture to call Him her Bridegroom or her Beloved, but less familiarly refers to Him as the King. Nevertheless, whilst she thus acknowledges the immensity of His elevation above her, her humility preserves its simple trust.

This text, which I have been discussing, is particularly applicable to the primitive Church. Call to mind those days following upon the Ascension of the Lord to the place which was His from eternity, where He sits in Majesty at the Father's Right Hand, yet, at the same time, reposes in tranquillity on that ancient, noble, most glorious Couch of His Bosom. Call to mind, I say, those days when the disciples were gathered together in the upper chamber, "persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." Does it not seem to you, my brethren, that then especially, the spikenard of the young and tremulous Spouse "sent forth the odour thereof"? And when "suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting," could not the same Spouse, still tender, weak, and needy, say with all confidence, "while the King was at His repose, my spikenard sent forth the odour thereof"? It certainly was made clear to all who were present in that upper chamber, how pleasing and acceptable was the odour sent up by her humility, from the multitude and magnificence of the gifts wherewith it was immediately rewarded. Nor did she prove ungrateful for so great a benefit. For hear how, being instantly filled with holy love, she prepares to suffer all things for the sake of her Divine Benefactor. "A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me," she exclaims, "He shall abide between my breasts."

My weakness, brethren, which you well know, will not suffer me to proceed. So I shall conclude with this one remark. The Spouse here declares herself ready, for the love of her Bridegroom, to endure the

bitterness of tribulation, signified by the bundle of myrrh. The full exposition of this verse you shall have at another time; on condition, however, that by your prayers you obtain for me the light of the Holy Ghost. For He alone can enable us to understand the words of the Spouse, since it was He Who inspired them, and made them such as He knew would most fittingly express the praises of Him Whose Spirit He is, the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XLIII

On the Remembrance of Christ's Sufferings.

"A little bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me, He shall abide between my breasts."

"A little bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me, He shall abide between my breasts."* Before she called Him "the King," here He is her "Beloved"; then He took His repose on His own royal Couch of the Father's Bosom, now He abides between her breasts. Oh, how great, my brethren, must be this virtue of humility, seeing that it can so easily attract and draw down to itself even the Divine Majesty! How quickly the name expressive of reverence has been exchanged for the name inspired by love! With what celerity has He drawn nigh, Who a while since was so far remote! "A little bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me." Myrrh, because of its bitterness, is used to denote the poignancy and painfulness of tribulation. The Spouse, then, foreseeing that she shall be called upon to suffer for the sake of her Beloved, speaks these words with a feeling of joy; for she hopes to be able, with His help, to endure every trial with fortitude. Hence we read,

* In the year 1855, when the bones of St. Bernard were examined, there was found amongst them a wooden tablet, faced with parchment, whereon were inscribed the words, "Fasciculus myrrhae dilectus meus mihi, inter ubera mea commorabitur." The tablet has a hook attached. The natural inference is that it hung in the Saint's cell, and after his death, perhaps at his own desire, was laid upon his breast.—(Translator.)

"They went from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." And she calls her Bridegroom, not a large bundle (*fascis*) but "a little bundle" (*fasciculus*) to signify that she esteems as light and little all labours and afflictions undergone for His love. Truly He is but a little bundle, since for our sakes He was born as a little Child. He is also a little bundle pressing but lightly upon us, because "the sufferings of this time," which He requires us to endure, "are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, which shall be revealed in us." And the Apostle adds, "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." Consequently, He Who is to us now as a little bundle of myrrh, on account of the sacrifices demanded by His service, shall one day become for us an immensity of glory. How could He be anything but a little bundle, Whose "yoke is sweet" and "Whose burden is light"? Not that His burden is light in itself—for no light thing is the smarting sense of suffering, no light thing is the bitterness of death—but it becomes light to him who loves. Hence the Spouse does not say absolutely "a little bundle of myrrh is my Beloved," but "a little bundle of myrrh is my Beloved *to me*," because her charity made His burden light. Hence also she calls Him her "Beloved," in order to indicate that the power of love overcomes the bitterness of all tribulation, and that "love is strong as death." And to show that she glories not in herself, but in the Lord, and that she looks not to her own virtue, but to the help of God for constancy under trial, she tells us that He

will abide between her breasts. Therefore, in another place, she sings to Him with confidence, "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me."

In a preceding sermon, as I remember, I interpreted these breasts to mean, the one (which I named Congratulation) a facility for sympathising with joy, the other (called Compassion) a readiness to sympathise with grief, so that the Spouse might appear as fulfilling the injunction of St. Paul, where he says, "Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep." But inasmuch as she is placed between the extremes of prosperity and adversity, and (as she is well aware) dangers are not wanting on either side, therefore she desires to have Him also abiding between these breasts of her, so that, protected against every enemy by His unceasing help, she may neither be unduly lifted up by consolation, not too much cast down by affliction. You, my brethren, if you be wise, will imitate her prudence, and never allow this precious little bundle of myrrh to be taken from the centre of your hearts, even for the space of a single hour; but you will keep constantly before your minds and ponder in assiduous meditation all that Christ suffered for you, so that, like the Spouse, you also may be able to say, "A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me, He shall abide between my breasts."

As for me, my brethren, from the very beginning of my conversion to God, to make up for all the merits which I knew myself to lack, I applied myself with diligence to collect together, and to bind into a bundle, and to place between my breasts, all the cares and sorrows which my Lord had to endure; in the first

place the sufferings of His childhood years; then the labours He underwent in preaching, the fatigue of His journeyings, His watchings in prayer, His temptations and fastings, His tears of compassion, the traps laid for Him in His speech; and finally, His perils from false brethren, the revilings, the spittings, the blows, the mockeries, the reproaches, the nails, and all the other myrrhic plants, which, as you know, are plentifully growing for our healing in the evangelical forest. But amongst so many twigs of this odoriferous shrub, I must not omit to mention that other myrrh which He drank on the cross, and that wherewith He was embalmed for burial. The first of these signified His taking upon Himself the bitterness of my sins; the second was meant as a pledge of the future resurrection of my body. As long as I live, I will "publish the memory of the abundance of (this) sweetness." Thy mercies, O Lord, "I will never forget, for by them Thou hast given me life."

These, my brethren, are the tender mercies which holy David in times past implored with tears. "Let Thy tender mercies come unto me," he entreats, "and I shall live." Other saints, also, of the Old Dispensation, sighed for the same, knowing that the "mercies of the Lord are many." How "many kings and prophets have desired to see and have not seen" the graces bestowed upon us! They have laboured and we "have entered into their labours." I have gathered the myrrh which they have planted. For me this little bundle has been reserved. No man shall take it away from me, for it shall abide between my breasts. I have said to myself that wisdom consists in meditating on these sufferings of my Saviour. In them I have placed the

perfection of justice, the fulness of knowledge, the riches of salvation, the abundance of merits. From them I sometimes drink a draught of salutary bitterness, and sometimes, again, I extract therefrom the soothing oil of consolation. It is they that support me in adversity and sober me in success; and as I journey along the royal but rugged heavenward way, amid the joys and sorrows of this mortal life, it is they that keep me safe from hurt, defending me against the enemies that lurk on every side. They unite me in the bonds of loving friendship to the Eternal Judge of the universe, by representing to me as meek and humble Him in Whose presence the very powers of heaven quake with fear, by showing not only as placable, but even as imitable, Him Who is inaccessible to the celestial principalities, and "terrible with the kings of the earth." Therefore, as you yourselves can bear witness, I have these mysteries of divine suffering often in my mouth, and God can bear me witness that they never leave my heart. How redolent of the same are all my writings, I have no need to mention. And whilst I live here below my only philosophy shall be "to know Jesus and Him Crucified," for that is the most sublime of all. I ask not, like the Spouse, where He lieth in the mid-day, since I have the happiness of knowing that He allows me to embrace Him, yea, even abides between my breasts. Nor need I inquire where He feedeth at noon, because I behold Him dying on the cross to save me. More sublime is the privilege solicited by the Spouse, but that bestowed on me has in it more of sweetness. What she requires is the bread of the strong, whilst I, as a mother, have obtained, not bread, but milk, the milk which nourishes the hearts

of the little ones, which fills and expands the maternal breasts. Therefore "He shall abide between my breasts."

I counsel you, also, my dearest brethren, to collect for yourselves so sweet a little bundle, to place it in the very centre of your hearts, and with it to fortify the entrance thereof against every hostile incursion. So shall the Beloved abide between *your* breasts, as well. Keep this precious bundle, not behind or upon your backs, but ever before your eyes; otherwise, whilst you bear its burden, you cannot enjoy its fragrance; you feel its weight upon you, but derive no support from its perfume. Remember that the bundle is the Beloved Himself, Whom Simeon took into his arms, Whom Mary bore in her womb, nursed on her lap, and placed as a Bridegroom between her breasts; and, I may add, Who came as the Word of the Lord to the Prophet Zachary and others. We may also believe that Joseph, Mary's husband, often fondled Him upon his knee. Consider now that all these kept Him before them rather than behind. Do you, therefore, follow their example, and do likewise. For, if you hold before your eyes Him Whom you carry as a little bundle of myrrh, you surely will not forget all He suffered for your sakes; and the memory of that will make your own burdens lighter, through the grace of Him, the Bridegroom of the Church, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

APPENDIX

A RHYMED VERSION

OF

ST. BERNARD'S LAMENT FOR HIS BROTHER

I.

My theme to-day is love divine;
But brethren see: my eyes are drowned,
My voice makes but a quavering sound,
For bitter, killing grief is mine.

II.

Let them whose hearts are free from care
Discourse of joy and sweet repose:
For me, I can but speak of woes,
Of sighs and tears and black despair.

III.

Long, long I've laboured to conceal
The sorrow seething in my soul;
I cannot now my tears control,
But must avow the pain I feel.

IV.

To-day was Gerard laid to rest;
With tearless eye I watched the scene,
With steady voice and cheerful mien
I ministered and prayed and blessed.

V.

You wept, and wondered I alone
Could be so calm at such a time ;
And questioned was it faith sublime,
Or had my heart been turned to stone.

VI.

And all the while a tempest's force
Within me raged, but fearful lest
The sight of sorrow unrepressed
Might injure you, I checked its course.

VII.

I own myself subdued, and what
Surprise ? The fountain overflows,
My broken heart must weep its woes.
Oh, pity me and blame me not !

VIII.

You know, my children, well you know
How great a cause I have for grief.
Then grudge me not the poor relief
I find in speaking of my woe.

IX.

By double kinship close allied
We loved each other tenderly,
And he was all in all to me,
My strong support, my faithful guide.

X.

O cruel death what hast thou done?
So sweet a tie to sever so,
To murder with a single blow
Two lives by mutual love made one!

XI.

I live, I still draw vital breath,
My pulses beat, my senses smart,
But utter grief has slain my heart,
My life is now a living death.

XII.

A living death—what else is life
Despoiled of friendship? Brother dear,
Since thou art gone I'm full of fear
And misery and inward strife.

XIII.

Why was my heart so one with thine
If destined for this sad divorce?
Why could we not our mortal course
Complete together, brother mine?

XIV.

All mine the loss, a loss untold,
I only am of comfort reft,
Since thou for that which thou hast left
Enjoyest now the hundred-fold.

XV.

In life we both did equal own
The sweet delights of mutual love;
Now thou hast joined the choirs above
And I am left to weep alone.

XVI.

Thou drinkest with the saints of God
From source divine immortal bliss,
How canst thou thy poor brother miss
Who writhes with pain beneath His rod?

XVII.

Submerged in oceans of delight
Why shouldst thou think of me at all?
How can I hope thy gaze will fall
From Him to view my woful plight?

XVIII.

Or can it be the saints above
Still care for them they loved of yore;
That they whom grief can touch no more
Look down on us with pitying love?

XIX.

To doubt it were to fall from grace;
For God is Living Charity,
And all His friends become as He
When that they see Him face to face.

XX.

Methinks my brother's voice I hear;
"Although a mother should forget
To love her helpless infant, yet
Should I not fail to hold thee dear."

XXI.

O happy days when at my call
I had a friend so tried and true,
So wise and good, whose merits drew
A benediction on us all!

XXII.

But death has snatched him from my side
And left me to lament his loss;
And crushed beneath my heavy cross
I lie submerged in sorrow's tide

XXIII.

Who now shall light my darkened way?
Who now shall soothe my aching mind?
Who now a remedy shall find
For all the ills that on me prey?

XXIV.

Thanks, Gerard, thanks to thee for all
The hours I've spent in peaceful prayer;
For thou didst all my burdens bear,
Still prompt to answer every call.

XXV.

Now sorrow claims me for its own,
My soul is racked with bitter pain,
I seek for solace but in vain,
With only strength to weep and moan.

XXVI.

The sun is from my heaven gone,
Nor moon nor stars my pathway light,
I'm shrouded in the gloom of night,
Without a hand to guide me on.

XXVII.

Gush forth, ye fountains of my head,
My wretched eyes, dissolve in tears,
Let sorrow claim its long arrears,
For Gerard—woe the day!—is dead.

XXVIII.

Do you at least, my friends, condole
With me, because the Lord has laid
His heavy hand on me and made
A sea of sorrow in my soul.

XXIX.

"Weep not," say you? You speak in vain,
My strength is not the strength of stones,
'Tis flesh, not brass, surrounds my bones·
How can I then dissemble pain?

XXX.

Oh yes, I weep, my tears shall pour
In constant streams until the day
When God shall wipe all tears away,
And death and pain shall be no more.

XXXI.

Think not because I thus complain
I blame the just decrees of God.
No, no ; I writhe beneath His rod,
And speak as one distraught with pain.

XXXII.

He gave us both what each could claim,
To him the crown, the cross to me.
The Lord is just, full well I see,
And blessed forever be His name.

XXXIII.

Sweet brother, shall I taste no more
The pleasure of thy company ?
Art thou forever lost to me ?
Or art thou but gone on before ?

XXXIV.

Oh yes, I hope to see thy face
Again where friends no longer fear
The pains of parting. Would 'twere near
Our meeting in that happy place !

XXXV.

For what is death? A gloomy gate,
Through which is reached immortal life,
A refuge sweet from care and strife,
The passage to a nobler state.

XXXVI.

Yea, death for us has ceased to be,
It died with Christ upon the cross,
Or only lives to mourn the loss
Of both its sting and victory.

XXXVII.

So reason tells me: "Be not sad":
But feeling owns not reason's rule,
The heart is wayward as a fool,
And grieves for what should make it glad.

XXXVIII.

And hence my tears shall ever flow,
All peace and joy are from me fled;
My heart is with my brother dead,
Oppressed beneath its weight of woe.

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